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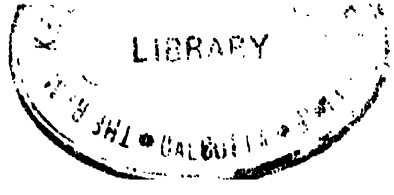
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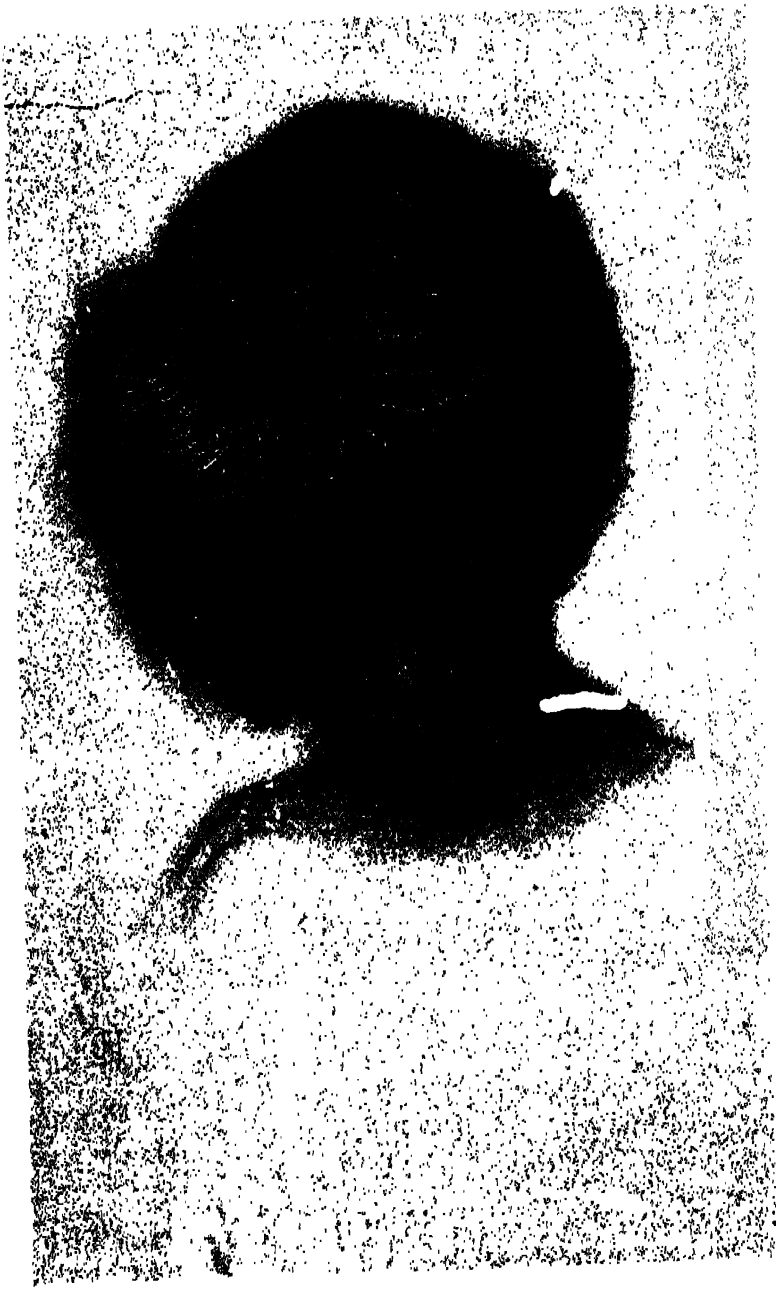
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SOME EMINENT VICTORIANS

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS IN THE WORLD OF ART AND LETTERS

BY

J. COMYNS CARR



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PREFACE

THOSE of us who have emerged from the Victorian Era with an undiminished reverence for the great names which have made it memorable, must be prepared to endure with patience the pitying tolerance, or even the indulgent rebuke, of the men who herald a younger generation.

It was only a few weeks ago that I ventured to enquire of a cultivated young writer of the newer school if Dickens was now much read by the generation which presumably he had a claim to represent. The question gave him no pause. In a sentence that was dictated solely, as it seemed, by a sincere desire to impart accurate information, he gravely informed me that among young men of culture Dickens was now never read after the age of fourteen. I confess that, despite the coldly judicial tone of this utterance, I was not entirely convinced, for I happen to know even young people who are still so far belated in their taste as to regard Dickens as an incomparable genius. But the statement helped me at any rate to realise how easy it is to grow old-fashioned, and suggested to me that in addressing an age which

believes that art, like science, is always advancing, it would be prudent, on the threshold of these reminiscences of some of the men I have known and whose work I have worshipped, to make frank avowal of my own faith, and humbly to confess my limitations.

Let me say, then, that in the region of Art and Literature I am still an impenitent Victorian. I have no desire to disparage the work of those who profess a more modern creed, and I think, although this perhaps may be vainglorious boasting, that I am not unable to appreciate the more instant appeal of a later day. But my talk with younger men, whose comradeship delights me, makes it often abundantly clear to me that I am disqualified, perhaps by age, from sharing to the full measure their more recent enthusiasms. Our occasional divergence of feeling, which it would be idle not to recognise, rests in some cases upon an essential difference in the point of view. The progress of science which, to borrow a phrase from Mr. Gladstone in regard to our revenue, is in our day "advancing by leaps and bounds," has, I think, set some younger men aglow with the thought that art too is destined, with the passing of the ages, to claim and to inherit a realm correspondingly enlarged.

This belief, perhaps only half confessed, that in the fields of Literature and Art the later achievement must, for that reason alone, be the greater achievement, is apt to beget in the minds of some younger men a certain impatience with the heroes of an

earlier day. As the topmost pebble set upon the upraised cairn which represents the sum of scientific knowledge must of necessity record the final altitude which science has reached, so it is in some quarters held, by an analogy that seems to me radically mistaken, that the most modern achievement in art has the right to claim in virtue of its historical position a higher place than that which it has succeeded.

Let me confess at once that this is not my belief. There is a little fringe of science lying at the threshold of every art, and until the secrets it has to yield are conquered, the illusion of progressive advancement is inevitable. But that puny conquest counts for nothing beside art's constant and unchangeable conditions, conditions which leave its earlier victories unsurpassed and unsurpassable. It is, indeed, the glory of the artist's spirit, in whatever field it be exercised, that it is incapable of advancement. Each achievement, as time attests its worth to rank at all, remains through all time incomparable. It knows no rivalry. It defies all competition. It affects no advance upon the triumphs of yesterday; it fears no eclipse from the victories of to-morrow. And although history shows many barren seasons when the spirit of the artist sinks and flags, the revival, when it comes, is due to no added store of knowledge, but is the free gift of men newly risen whose genius proves itself able to recreate that power of imaging life which in the hands of genius has always been perfect from the first.

Supported by this faith I will own I am not very gravely discouraged by occasionally finding myself ranked as a champion of an outworn fashion. The progress of art is the progress of the pendulum. It advances and recedes according to a law of movement that only the fullest and profoundest knowledge of all the factors that make up human life can enable us to decipher.

But that art does often lie fallow after a period of rich harvest must be indisputable to all who have carefully studied its history. It need not, therefore, be wholly surprising if, in that little corner of time we inhabit to-day, there should have come a momentary lull following on a period of intense and varied vitality.

My mission here is simply to recall and to record personal reminiscences of some of the great men who sowed and reaped a part of that great harvest garnered during the later half of the last century. In the history of English Literature and English Art, I believe it presents a rich yield that will not soon be equalled as the fruit of an equal measure of time, and I am prepared to accept lightly enough the criticism that probably awaits me, that the heroes whom I have worshipped are no longer the heroes of to-day.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

FROM my earliest boyhood I think my bent was towards a literary career, but it was long before my ambition could be put to the test. The seventh of a family of ten, it was scarcely to be expected that I could, in those earlier days, make known my choice of a calling that seemed so little likely to yield a livelihood. My father was in business in London, and although he took the keenest interest in politics and public affairs, and was an eager reader of the literature of his time, he had a sufficiently hard struggle to provide for us all, and it was but natural in his care for our future that his thoughts should turn to the choice of some solid commercial career.

We lived, in the days that I can first recall, in the Manor House on Barnes Common, a picturesque old-fashioned building that still remains, though shorn of the larger grounds which were our delight as children.

The garden and fields, now partly built over, formed then a little earthly paradise to a large family, and the open Common covered with gorse and bracken served as a part of our wider playground. There we roamed at will, and it was there, with each returning October, that we used to gather the

material for a great bonfire with which we annually celebrated the fifth of November.

Sallying forth from our field-gate that abutted upon the Common, armed with a bill-hook surreptitiously filched from the gardener's tool-basket, there we used to pile up our wheelbarrow with the gorse we had no right to cut, keeping a careful eye the while, lest the sudden approach of the policeman should set us within the grip of the law.

These raiding expeditions sometimes brought us into collision with the boys of the village, whom we only knew under the generic title of "the cads," and with whom we waged unceasing warfare. Especially did we dread their onslaught as the fifth of November approached, for we knew well it was ever their malignant purpose to fire the pile before the appointed night had arrived.

It was our custom, therefore, to keep watch and guard for several preceding nights, and sometimes when we heard sounds heralding the approach of the enemy across the fields we would send rockets whizzing along the grass—a defensive operation we discovered to be greatly dreaded by even the boldest of "the cads."

The choice of an appropriate Guy was always an important point of consideration. One year, I remember, it was Bomba, and during the days of the Indian Mutiny a great effigy of Nana Sahib was consigned to the flames, which gathered added intensity by the insertion into the midst of the huge pile of gorse and dried wood of a seasoned tar-barrel annually purchased by my father as his contribution to the revels of this well-loved day.

The valorous deeds of our soldiers in the Crimea and the nameless horrors of the Mutiny which followed so closely at its heels stand among my most vivid recollections of those earlier days.

I was born in the year 1849, and I can still remember an elder cousin in his scarlet uniform taking his way across the foot-path that leads to Barnes station, to start for the war in the Crimea.

With the events of the Mutiny our sympathies were even more actively engaged. We were closely allied at that time with a family, one of whom, General Henry Marshall, but lately commanded the Artillery in South Africa. They had lived in India, and had relatives still there at the time of the outbreak, and the terrible news as it reached England had therefore an enthralling interest for us all.

It was not to be supposed that my father could afford to any of us the luxury of a public school. At first, with my brothers, I was educated at home under a private tutor, and then at the age of thirteen I took my way to Bruce Castle School, Tottenham, at that time under the mastership of Arthur Hill, brother of Sir Rowland Hill of postage-stamp fame.

I remember my elder brother and I took our places on the form allotted to new boys side by side with William Lewin, better known as William Terriss the actor, and it was only a little while before his tragic end that he and I were recalling those times at Bruce Castle, where, if he gained but little learning, he at any rate acquired a perfect mastery in the art of tree-climbing. There was no elm in the playground, or beyond it, which he had not scaled in search of rooks' eggs, and his constant companion

in these lawless excursions was Fred Selous, the African hunter and explorer, with whom not long ago in his Surrey home, where we sat surrounded by his many trophies of the chase, I was glad to renew our memories of that earlier time.

Terriss's name reminds me of an incident of our school-days which proves that at that time, at any rate, his histrionic abilities were scarcely equal to mine. Bruce Castle School boasted two masters of the French language, both of whom were regarded as marks for the ridicule and scorn of the English-born boy. Something of the spirit of Waterloo still survived in our outrageous treatment of these gentlemen, whom we could not help regarding as the luckless representatives of a beaten and inferior race.

One of them, I remember, had a known fondness for natural history, and under cover of sharing his enthusiasm we could nearly always lure him to stories of different wild animals which served to fill the hour which should have been devoted to the study of the French language.

This was our more amiable way of tormenting the unfortunate gentleman. Occasionally, in order to frustrate his well-meant efforts to instruct us, we resorted to more drastic measures. I remember one day it was jointly agreed among us that we should all assume to be afflicted with the worst kind of hacking cough, and from the very moment the class opened the room resounded with the most distressing symptoms of our common complaint.

Our master became at length fully conscious

of the plot that had been forged against him, and slamming the book in a rage announced his determination of summoning Mr. Arthur Hill to restore the discipline of the class. This show of unexpected authority on his part produced something like consternation, and in a moment all the bronchial sounds were silenced—all save one, for it seemed to me then that the only policy, however desperate it might prove, was to persist in the signs of the malady which had already been announced.

In the interval of dead silence in which we awaited the arrival of the headmaster I therefore continued, at brief but regular intervals, with the same persistent cough which the others had abandoned. On Mr. Arthur Hill's arrival, Mon. Delmas—for that was the unfortunate gentleman's name—explained with some volubility the cause of his complaint against us, but at the finish, with a noble credulity that I had hardly dared to hope for, he exempted me from the general condemnation.

"Now, Carr," he said, "has a cough, but he suffer so much it is better he do not attend the class for a space."

On this intimation I was permitted to quit the room and to spend the rest of the dreaded hour in the playground, where afterwards I incurred the obloquy of my companions, and especially of William Terriss, because they had failed to adopt my more ingenious policy.

It is small wonder, with these obstacles deliberately set in our own path, that at our school, at any rate, the acquisition of any knowledge of the French tongue was of the very slightest.

I suppose every boy has his school hero. Mine, I remember, was a South American Spaniard named Echenique, whose father had, for a brief space, figured as President of Peru. He was as handsome as Dickens has pictured Steerforth; and afterwards, when I made the acquaintance of David Copperfield, I had cause to recognise with what unerring sympathy and fidelity the greatest of our masters of romance has mirrored the worship of a boy.

Bruce Castle was, in its way, a remarkable school, though it made no pretence of affording any very extended classical education. It was, indeed, designed for boys of the middle class, of whom I was one, but it was remarkable in this sense, that it was governed on principles of conduct that differed materially from those accepted in other schools of the time.

The Hills held peculiar theories upon the education of boys. Corporal punishment was a thing altogether unknown, and the severest penalty even upon the most hardened offender consisted in nothing worse than a course of compulsory exercise. There was a Prefect, specially told off to take out every day, in what in happier circumstances would have been their play-time, those malefactors who had failed to conform to the discipline of the school.

And yet, under this mild régime, discipline was never lax, both Mr. Arthur Hill and his son Dr. Birkbeck Hill, who succeeded him soon after I entered the school, possessing in a rare degree the power of evoking a sense of responsibility in those elder pupils who controlled the school's conduct. I



G. BIRKBECK HILL

To face page 7

think only once in the period of my school-days did a case occur in which the headmaster had need to resort to the final penalty of expulsion.

Dr. Birkbeck Hill was, in a special sense, a man who won the affection of his pupils. He came to us from Oxford, where he had been the friend of Morris and Swinburne, and I remember the first time that I saw one of those newly designed wall-papers, which were destined afterwards to play so important a part in the movement initiated by Rossetti and Morris, was in the dining-room of Bruce Castle School.

Dr. Birkbeck Hill was a man of considerable literary taste and literary power. He was contributing at that time, though it was not generally known, some brilliant light articles to the *Saturday Review* under the editorship of Mr. Harwood, and he very soon attached himself to that devoted study of Dr. Johnson which finally provided the theme for some admirable work in criticism and biography.

It is possible that he may have perceived in me some inclination towards letters, for he often used to show me his articles in the current number of the *Review*, and very soon by his own enthusiasm he awakened in me an interest in his hero Johnson, which has never since abated. A copy of Boswell's *Life*, which he afterwards gave me on the occasion of my marriage, still stands in its ten little volumes as one of the books within reach of my bed. They share the honours of my book-shelf with the novels of Charles Dickens, and for me there are no two authors to whom I can so constantly return with ever-renewed enjoyment when sleep is not easy to win.

But there was an older master, Mr. Braid, who exercised an even more powerful influence in forming and directing my taste. His special subject in the curriculum of the school was mathematics, but he was an ardent lover of literature and a devoted student of Shakespeare. He did not live in the school, but many times after school hours he used to take me down to his modest rooms in the village and show me some of the books in his small but well-loved library.

Impelled by his enthusiasm I had read, before I left school, the whole of Shakespeare, as well as *Paradise Lost* and the shorter poems of Milton; and it was by his encouragement that I made my first attempt in writing, in the sufficiently ambitious experiment of an essay on *King Lear*. I have lost the essay, and the world has lost it, a fact not to be deeply deplored by either. But this crude experiment set me on my way, and when I quitted school at the age of sixteen my ambition was already aflame to try and do something in the world of letters. But, curiously enough, the aptitude which I had shown at school was towards mathematics, and here my work had so far impressed the examiners, one of whom was Charles Faulkner, afterwards so closely associated with Rossetti and Burne-Jones, that Dr. Hill endeavoured to persuade my father to send me to Cambridge.

I do not now know whether I regret the fact that my father's means did not suffice to carry out that project. It might have diverted me from those things which I even then began to love, and have never ceased to care for. In any case, it

seemed obviously necessary that, as one of a family of ten, I should at once apply myself to a calling in which I could earn my living. Accordingly at the age of sixteen, when I quitted Bruce Castle School, my father articled me, at some considerable sacrifice to himself, in a stock-broker's office in the City.

It will be evident that the education with which I went forth into the world could not have been very profound—a little Latin, enough to enable me to read, in later years, Horace and Virgil with pleasure, but not without the aid of a dictionary; no Greek—that was not considered indispensable to a commercial career; mathematics sufficient, as my examiners told me, to have given me more than a fair chance of a scholarship at Cambridge; and a taste for literature mainly acquired in the vacant hours after school.

From the first my task in the City was not congenial to me, although I worked hard and worked early and late. But when office hours were over I still contrived to keep alive that interest in books which had already been deeply implanted in me, and to make some small essays in journalism and in verse which at the first, I am bound to admit, met with scant encouragement from the editors whom I bombarded. I can remember now receiving from Charles Dickens, with a pain that was also blended with pleasure, a polite little note in blue ink returning one of my many rejected communications. Mr. Thackeray from the *Cornhill* conferred upon me a like distinction—a distinction, as I call it, because even the fact that

they declined to publish what I wrote seemed to me at the time almost to form a link of association with men whom I so greatly admired.

All this tentative work was done in the late evenings, carried sometimes far into the night, but it did not prevent me from being at my office in the City at a quarter past nine, and remaining there always till six and sometimes, on account days, till nine and ten. At the same time I was greedily reading the works of the men I worshipped most—the drama, and the lyrical poetry of the Elizabethans; the novelists, starting with Sterne, Fielding, and Smollett; the poets of the great revival which ushered in the nineteenth century; and those later poets and writers, all of whom were then living, who gave to the Victorian era its glory.

I have often thought that the youth of a later generation can hardly realise the wealth of contemporary achievement that lay around those of us who chanced to be born in that fortunate hour. However great, or however greatly admired, may be the writers of a past day, they can never speak with the quickened magic that a living master can command. And what masters then stood there to win our worship! Tennyson in his prime, and Browning, whose unexhausted energy had yet to give to the world *The Ring and the Book*; Swinburne, whose new and intoxicating music came like a voice from an undiscovered land of song; and Morris, who in his *Defence of Guinevere* had already found a key that was to unlock a long-unused storehouse of legend and romance. And then, a little later, Rossetti, mystic and passionate, whose brooding

melodies seemed to mirror in verse those "painted poems" that were wrought by his brush; and in fiction, where Meredith had only lately arisen, there still stood Dickens and Thackeray, George Eliot and the Brontës; and in other fields of literature, Carlyle, Mill and Ruskin, Emerson and Froude.

They were all our heroes then, and if Time has not left the place of all unshaken, enough remain to form such a goodly company as no later hour can boast. And this is so far acknowledged by the youth of a younger generation that I find those of quickest appreciation in poetry and fiction constantly tempted to steal my heroes and set them above their own.

Already at school I had made acquaintance with the poems of Wordsworth, a strange choice for a boy; and the circumstances of his life, and the revolution which he partly headed, drew me quickly to others of the group until all lesser admiration was finally merged in my worship of Keats. It was only in later days that I brought myself to the study of the poets of the intermediate time between the Elizabethans and the close of the eighteenth century, and I will confess that even now I have no great zest for them.

But turning aside for the moment from the things that already interested me most, I remember being vividly impressed by some events that occurred in the City during the period of my apprenticeship. The sudden transition from private school to the Stock Exchange presented points of interest that could not fail to attract a boy, even though his ambition was otherwise engaged.

I was in the City in the year 1867, the year of the great financial crisis which is associated with the name of Overend Gurney. The streets and narrow lanes round about the Stock Exchange during that turbulent time presented many picturesque sights, and within the Stock Exchange itself were daily scenes of almost maddening excitement.

One day I waited outside a great bank, one of a seething crowd of many hundreds, in momentary expectation that the doors would be closed, but the minutes and the hours passed, and as four o'clock approached it became known that the danger had been averted. Many similar scenes were to be witnessed at that time, but, although they provided me with excitement enough and to spare, even these vivid incidents in the career into which I had been thrust did not induce me to swerve from the resolution I had already secretly formed, not to remain in the City when the days of my apprenticeship were concluded.

I think, however, that, notwithstanding the distaste I had for my work, I performed my task zealously enough. So, indeed, it must have been, for when I finally announced to the firm my intention to retire, one of the partners asked me to reconsider my decision, holding out to me the inducement that if I would remain till I was twenty-one there would be a good prospect of my being promoted to a junior partnership.

But my choice had already been made, and I was in no mind to change it. Still secretly nursing the thought of a literary career, it was, nevertheless, clear to me that, for the time at any rate, I must

adopt a more definite occupation. I therefore made up my mind to study for the Bar. My only trouble was to know how to announce this decision to my dear father, who had spent his hardly-earned money in giving me this first and great chance in the world, and to whom I knew the resolution at which I had arrived would be a source of bitter disappointment and regret.

And so, indeed, it was! But he was the widest-minded and the most liberal-hearted of men, and, when at last I found the courage to break it to him, he hardly allowed me to perceive the deep disappointment which I knew he was suffering. For my own part I have never regretted those days passed in the City, though at the time I felt them to be barren and wasted. Perhaps I learned as much as I should have acquired at Cambridge, though it was learning of a different sort. Some knowledge of men I certainly gained, some knowledge also of the habit of work which no career, however detached from business, can afford to dispense with.

Certainly, if there had not been some such obstacle in my path, I should not have thrown myself into the life I had chosen with the same keenness and persistence. The opposition which these earlier years set in the way of the calling I most wanted to pursue nerved and stiffened my resolution. I did a prodigious amount of reading in those late nights after the strenuous days in the City, and I think the fact that I had broken away from the life that was laid out for me gave me a higher courage to try and succeed in the life of my own choosing.

Already, before I had made my change of view

known to my father, I had resolved to matriculate at the London University in preparation to becoming a student for the Bar, and, when the break came, I at once joined the classes at University College and assisted myself further by private tuition in several branches of knowledge which I had to take up for examination.

Some Greek I had to learn, for I had none, a little chemistry, and then there was my Latin, not at any time considerable, to be furbished up. None of these things could I have done without the liberal help of my father, for I had no resources of my own. But this liberal help was never lacking, and I think, when his first disappointment had passed, he became interested in furthering my new career. But the work had to be swiftly done, for I was impatient to be upon my way, and could not have been done in the time, in view of my meagre stock of scholastic knowledge, if it had not been for the zealous help of those who coached me.

By their aid I was enabled to matriculate at the London University, and in the Honours Division, in February of the year 1870, just a month before my twenty-first birthday. In February 1871 I obtained the First Class in Honours in Jurisprudence and Roman Law, and in July 1871, having already been entered as a student of the Inner Temple, I secured the scholarship in Roman and International Law from the Council of Legal Education. Shortly afterwards, in the year 1872, I was called to the Bar at the Inner Temple, and with this event the period of my boyhood may be said to have closed.

CHAPTER II

IDLE HOURS

It might perhaps be supposed, from the brief account I have given of myself, that these earlier days were wholly devoted to study and hard work. This, however, was very far from being the case. At school I had been an ardent cricketer and a lover of football, and in the holidays with my second brother, who was as keenly devoted to fishing as I was, I passed many a happy hour among the hills of Cumberland and in the Scottish Highlands.

It was in Cumberland that we were first initiated into the mysteries of the craft by a genial drunkard named Atkinson, who dwelt in a small cottage close by Wordsworth's grave in Grasmere churchyard.

My father had been a native of the hills, and his forebears came of that race of Dalesmen, or small free-holders, owning farms of a hundred acres or more, whose independence of character Wordsworth so strongly extols, but whose little properties have been long since absorbed in the great estates of the Lake District.

My grandfather's farm was situated at Jonby, midway between Penrith and the shores of Ullswater, and it was natural, when my father's resources

sufficed, that our summer outing should be made in the land of his birth.

I think we all of us inherited his love of the hills, and it was in those fishing days, while we were staying in a house that stood close beside Grasmere churchyard, that I renewed and completed my study of Wordsworth, whom I had first learned to love while I was at school.

How simple must have been my father's life in those boyish days before he set forth on his business career is shown in the fact that he was fond of relating to us that he and his brothers used always to go barefoot to school, and only put on their shoes and stockings when they neared the village.

To Scotland my brother and I journeyed mostly alone, combining the pleasures of a walking tour with the exercise of our favourite sport. Our means were not very ample for these rambling excursions, and we not unseldom found ourselves in a tight place before the end of our journey was reached.

I remember in particular that on one occasion at the close of a delightful holiday we arrived at Callander with little more than our third-class return tickets in our pockets. That afternoon we were to take train for London, but we had walked for many miles and were desperately hungry. Outside what seemed to us to be the most modest inn in the town we held a council of war, and at last determined to venture upon ordering a cold lunch.

The resources of the establishment were meagre, and were fairly outstripped by our ravenous appetites. Long before the latter were satisfied, the one cold joint of lamb which the establishment possessed was

exhausted. We called for more, but there was no more, so there was nothing left for us but to call for the bill, when, to our horror and dismay, we found that the amount surpassed by two or three shillings the little hoard that was still left to us.

The situation was critical and called for a Napoleonic remedy. After a whispered consultation with my brother I boldly summoned the waiter and demanded to know if the fixed price charged for a cold lunch did not allow us to have as many helpings as we pleased. The waiter, brought to bay, had to confess that this was the case, and thereupon, with sudden audacity, I urged the point that, as he had been unable to satisfy our just demands, the bill must be proportionately reduced. After considerable parley, with an occasional reference to a landlady who sat behind a screen, and who may have been moved by a feeling of pity for our obvious embarrassment, our plea was allowed, and we walked from the inn with a sense of triumphant victory in our hearts, and with just threepence-ha'penny in our pockets to start on our journey to town.

As we were waiting on the platform of Callander station, with no baggage but our knapsacks and our fishing-rods, I overheard a conversation which has always seemed to me to throw a lurid light upon certain aspects of the Scottish character.

Two pawky tradesmen of the district were pacing up and down the platform in earnest talk, and as they passed me I caught this one sentence, torn from its context:

"Should I outlive my wife, as I hope to do——"

said the elder to the younger, and then they passed out of hearing.

What was to follow on the realisation of this fond dream I have often longed to know, but even as the statement stands I have always thought it forms a notable monument to the caution and foresight of the race.

There are several picturesque sayings of the Highlanders that come back to me as connected with these annual excursions. We had been staying for a few days at the little inn at Luib, situated about five miles from Loch Dochart, where we went daily to fish, and the gillie who used to row us on the loch had many a pleasant story to tell of his working days in the years when he had followed the calling of a shepherd.

I remember one evening, as we walked home with our faces turned to one of those beautiful sunsets that I think are only to be seen in the Highlands, he was telling us of a favourite sheep-dog that had been for years his companion on the hills. But the time came when age unfitted the poor animal for his work, and when the only kindness in the shepherd's eyes was to put an end to its life. And then he described how he had tied it to an apple-tree and got his gun to shoot it.

"An' I could scarce look at the beast," he said, "as I fired, for I loved him well and he had been sae wise."

The tears rolled down his cheeks as he told the story, and we paused in our talk as we trudged along the sun-lit road. Then out of the silence came this further utterance:

"I buried him," he faltered, "at the foot of the apple-tree"—and then another pause, and then the final words—"an' there would be a rare crop of apples on the tree the year, for there's naething for an apple-tree like a dead dog."

This anecdote has always seemed to me characteristic of the Highland nature where poetry and prose lie closely side by side, and where the simple mind that holds them both is quite unconscious of any shock of feeling in the rapid transition from one to the other.

In this respect I think they show a close resemblance to the peasants of Northern Italy, in whom there is this same frank avowal of swiftly changing feeling; and neither in the one nor in the other does there seem to occur the need, always felt by the Englishman, of forming a bridge of sentiment from the world of fact to the world of passion.

A great race are these Highland gillies, claiming and according equality even in a calling in which they are very conscious of their superiority; never lacking in courtesy, and yet yielding with a certain proud independence all deference that is rightly due to the temporary relation of master and servant. In their speech they are sometimes curiously felicitous, and, using our English language as in a sense a strange tongue, they sometimes exhibit, for that reason, a purity and delicacy in the selection of words that a native can hardly command.

There was a very pretty phrase used by an old peasant at Killin with whom I was chatting one evening outside his cottage door. A pretty girl passed along on the other side of the road, and,

wishing to be as Scotch as I could in order to ingratiate myself with the old man, who was vastly entertaining in his stories of the village, I said, "That's a bonny lassie!" to which he replied, "Ay, sir, she is, but I'm thinking maybe she's just bonnier than she's better." How much more delicate in its inference, how much milder in its condemnation, than our crude statement, "She's no better than she should be!"

In those earlier times the "dry fly" as a lure for trout was scarcely known, and even to this day it is regarded with undisguised scepticism by the majority of Scotch gillies. It is not many years ago that I astonished an expert in the older fashion by its successful application on a little loch on the hills above Glenmuick, where I was staying with Lord Glenesk. We had ridden for five or six miles to reach our fishing-ground, and when we arrived it seemed as though we had come upon a fruitless errand—there was not a ripple upon the water and not a rise to be seen. The gillie who was with me scanned the surface of the lake with a melancholy eye. Towards evening, however, the fish began to move, and as sunset approached they were feeding eagerly. But the absence of any breeze rendered casting with the wet fly a barren toil. It was then that I drew from my case a large alder dressed as a floating fly. When I showed it to the gillie his contempt was unconcealed. "What sort of an animal might that be?" he inquired, and when I explained its uses to him, he turned his face towards the sunset with a look of patient and pitying toleration, merely remarking for my comfort that I "might

just as well throw my bonnet into the loch." But his scorn quickly changed to wonder as fish after fish was drawn to the bank, and when we parted at the close of the day he somewhat sheepishly entreated me to leave him as a legacy one or two specimens of those same "animals."

I had a somewhat similar experience in Switzerland a few years later. The little crater lakes on the summit of the Gothard Pass are well stocked with trout, and the landlord of the hotel where we lunched advised me to accept the services of the chef, who was reckoned locally a very mighty exponent of the piscatorial art. But when my comrade observed my methods and noted the results, he very speedily returned to his kitchen: "*Oh! là, là ça, vous savez, je ne comprends pas du tout. Bon jour, monsieur,*" and so we parted.

I think every sportsman-born has in him something of the poacher. Certainly one of the keenest and most skilful fishermen of my acquaintance has made confession to me of occasional lapses into the most illicit practices when fairer means had failed. In our earlier essays among the hills of Westmoreland and Cumberland my brother and I were frankly unscrupulous, in so far at least as our limited skill permitted. There was a little pool in the hills above Thirlemere called Harrop Tarn which was so completely surrounded by a quaking morass that fishing from the bank was almost impossible. And yet we contrived to extract many a good trout from that same tarn by the poachers' device of cross-lining. Joining our casts together, we were able, by letting out the line from either rod, to reach the very centre

of the sheet of water, and when a fish was hooked we reeled in and drew him to the one little bit of firm land on one side or the other where he could be safely brought to the basket.

I knew nothing of the literature of the art when I first learned to fish at the age of twelve, and it has often amazed me since to note what wondrous feats of skill can be performed—in books. How to cast in the teeth of a facing wind, how to avoid the sagging of the line in a swift stream, how to clear a spreading bush immediately behind you—there are exact and precise receipts for all these accomplishments, but they do not always serve you by the water-side. There was a time when the written record of such triumphs of skill made me feel that I scarcely deserved to rank as a fisherman at all, but it has been my fortune occasionally to see some of these book-made anglers at their work, and the result in nearly every case has been to restore to me a measure of self-esteem.

The truth is that the art of fishing can only be acquired on the banks of a stream, and is rarely acquired at all unless it has been practised in boyhood. And even so it lies not within the reach of all, even of those who ardently desire to succeed. I remember a comrade in one of my earlier fishing excursions in Scotland who laboured zealously but fruitlessly to obtain even the most modest degree of proficiency, and as he stood up in the boat, his line hopelessly entangled for the hundredth time, the gillie who was rowing us, moved by a spirit of prophecy that broke down all social reserve, suddenly turned to him and addressing him by his Christian name: "Frank,

"Frank," said he, "you're a good fellow, but you'll *never* be a fisherman!" And in truth he never was.

And yet, once a measure of mastery is won, fishing remains for those who love it an abiding passion. Time leaves undisturbed the keen excitement of the first adventure, and with each return of spring the longing to be out beside a stream sets the pulses newly beating. One day when we were trudging through a field of turnips in Fifeshire, the late Sir William Harcourt, as though pierced by sudden conviction, turned to me with the remark, "Carr, what a bore sport is!" And of some forms of sport that, I think, may sometimes be truly said. But your true fisherman is never bored. He counts no day blank till it is ended, for the last hours, as he well knows, may restore his broken fortunes and set a goodly brace or two in the empty basket.

And there is no sport, I think, that sorts so well with the occupations of a writer. Shooting and stalking need the surrender of the entire day, and are too exhausting to leave any appetite for intellectual labour. But with fishing it is not so. The angler who has the good fortune to dwell beside a stream can divide his energies between work and sport without neglect of either, and in my own case I have found them go happily hand in hand. Much of my play of *King Arthur* was written by the shores of Rannoch, which I had first known and loved as a boy, and there is a little cottage in Hertfordshire, unhappily no longer mine, that enshrines many happy memories wherein work and sport are linked in close association.

Walking tours have gone out of fashion nowa-

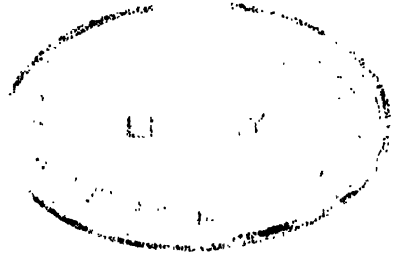
days; the bicycle and motor-car have engendered another taste, and have partly ruined the quiet ways that were once the exclusive property of the pedestrian. But they were a favourite pastime in the sixties and seventies, and, apart from the longer sojourn we used to make in the Lake District or in Scotland, there was scarcely an Easter or a Whitsuntide holiday which did not find me among the hills of Westmoreland and Cumberland. There, with a friend of my early years and still a friend to-day, we explored every hill and dale of the Lake District.

On one of those spring excursions I remember we had made rather a long day of it, starting from Patterdale in the morning, lunching at Grasmere, and then making our way by Easedale Tarn to the summit of High White Stones. It was our intention to descend from that point and to reach the hotel in Dungeon Ghyll in time for dinner. But on High White Stones an eerie and impenetrable white mist descended upon us and we missed our way. For several hours we wandered in the mist until we lost all count of where we were, but at last, by some strange good fortune, we found ourselves on the top of Langdale Pikes, a spot which I knew well from many an earlier excursion.

We both knew that below us lay Stickle Tarn, and that from Stickle Tarn ran the brook which would finally lead us to our now much-desired inn. And so in the drenching rain we cautiously descended the hillside till we got to the shores of the Tarn. Then, by some unexpected error, instead of turning on our right, which in a few

moments would have led us to the issue of the brook, we took the other direction and were forced to make the whole circuit of the Tarn, reaching at last, almost exhausted, the rushing torrent that descends to the valley. In such fear were we of losing our way again that we determined not to desert the bed of the stream, and, crawling cat-like from boulder to boulder, we found the village at last, and saw, with a delight that may be easily imagined, the far-off glimmer in the windows of the Dungeon Ghyll Hotel.

It was half-past ten before we arrived at the door, wet through, and with our slight stock of change contained in our knapsacks sodden with rain. But the landlord kindly lent us some strange garments of his own, and I do not think two men ever enjoyed a meal more than we two as we fell upon that staple dish of the Lake District, "ham and eggs."



CHAPTER III

ESSAYS IN JOURNALISM

EVEN before I left the City I had already made some tentative excursions into the realm of journalism. My first experiment, I remember, had something of a grotesque conclusion.

An early friend of mine, Arthur O'Neil, the younger half-brother of Henry O'Neil, the painter of *Eastward Ho*, had somehow persuaded a modest capitalist to venture a small sum of money in the establishment of a weekly journal called the *Dramatic and Musical Review*. We were both keenly interested in the drama, and I had assisted at O'Neil's first venture in the shape of a pantomime at the old Sadler's Wells Theatre.

To judge by the scene that occurred during the later stages of the entertainment, it could not have been deemed wholly successful. I remember that the members of the orchestra had to divide their attention between the music of the harlequinade and the shower of stone ginger-beer bottles that were hurled like hail from a hypercritical gallery.

O'Neil, who was older than I, and who had already had some slight experiences as a journalist, with a desire to encourage my budding ambition, asked me to do a criticism on a recently published

volume of Longfellow's Poems for this same *Dramatic and Musical Review*, of which he was the proud editor. I duly received and duly corrected the printed proof of my article with feelings of exaltation only to be realised by those who, for the first time, see their ideas in printed type, and then waited with eager expectation for the day of publication.

The office was situated in that older part of the Strand near St. Clement Danes which is now no more, and the publisher owned the two-fold responsibility of also issuing another weekly journal entitled the *Labour News*. Twopence was, I think, the price of our artistic organ, and as early as I could on the Saturday morning I presented myself at the office and tendered the sum required. Almost overwhelmed with excitement I rapidly scanned the columns of this slender journal to find the first-fruits of my pen. But my search yielded nothing but disappointment. The article was not there. I stood in the tiny office crushed by a sense of failure and misfortune, and was just going out into the grey street when the enterprising boy behind the counter, actuated by the simple desire to do business, asked me if I wanted a copy of the *Labour News*.

As a fact I wanted nothing but some place to hide the sense of humiliation which overpowered me, but as he added, "It's only a penny," I took the journal and went out into the street, and, as I listlessly scanned its pages through, I found, to my astonishment, my lost article on Longfellow's Poems.

It turned out afterwards that the *Dramatic and Musical Review* in that particular week had more than its needed supply of "copy," and the *Labour News*, on the other hand, finding itself short of material, a bright idea had come into the printer's mind that the review of Longfellow's Poems might be appropriately set beside advertisements as to the advantages of Canadian Emigration.

Little by little, from this first ludicrous start, I gained a modest footing in the world of journalism, at first as dramatic critic to the *Echo*, then edited by Arthur Arnold, brother of Sir Edwin Arnold, so long connected with the *Daily Telegraph*.

My services upon the *Echo* were not particularly lucrative, the payment for an article being rarely more than six or seven shillings; and my fare to and from Clapham Junction, where we lived at the time, and the necessary modest meal before the theatre began, almost entirely absorbed the sum that I earned.

From the *Echo* I drifted to the *Globe*, which was then under the editorship of Dr. Mortimer Granville, and here my work began in something like earnest. During my services as dramatic critic I had become acquainted with Thomas Purnell, and it was he who secured for me a regular position upon the staff of the *Globe*.

Our work there was sufficiently strenuous. There were three of us stationed in a room above the editorial sanctum, and here, between the hours of nine o'clock in the morning and twelve, we were engaged upon three columns of notes which formed the first page of the paper. The three of us were

Purnell, Francillon the novelist, and myself; and the life, wholly new to me, was at the time strangely fascinating and attractive.

Purnell was himself one of the quaintest and most characteristic figures I have ever encountered. A regular Bohemian in a Bohemia that has long lost its sea-board, he had the Bohemian frank detestation of work and utter disregard of all social conventions, and yet with these peculiarities were linked a fine taste and a personality of real distinction.

When I first met him he had just completed a series of papers in the *Athenæum* upon the drama under the signature of "Q," winning some little renown in a sharp controversy with Charles Reade, in which he was certainly not worsted.

My other stable companion, Francillon, was of an exactly opposite temperament. Endowed with considerable imagination, which was happily exhibited in *Pearl and Emerald*, a novel which had been published in the *Cornhill Magazine*, he was by habit plodding and industrious, qualities which aroused in Purnell a degree of disapproval that sometimes almost verged on resentment.

"Now, Francillon," he used to say, "loves work. I don't. I hate it; I loathe it! People will tell you, my dear Carribus"—for so he often addressed me—"that to work is to pray. Well, of the two, *I* find it easier to pray. Why should I work?" he used to add, with an air of deep and earnest conviction. "I want nothing, only my twopence. All I need is a herring and a glass of ale, and when I have earned that I like to be idle. Some

men, so they say, like work. I don't!" And he did not.

One fixed appointment which he held was to contribute a weekly article on Conservative Policy to the pages of an important provincial paper. Long before the day came when this article had to be despatched by the evening post he used to look upon the impending task with something like horror, and yet nothing could ever induce him to anticipate by an hour the execution of his labours.

Indeed, as a rule, he never wrote it at all. When the day came and we had finished our morning's work on the *Globe*, he would generally invite Francillon and myself to a frugal lunch at the old Gaiety Restaurant, and when the invitation was issued we always knew what was in store for us. As the lunch neared its end he would broach the subject by imploring us to supply him with a topic.

"It's the topic, my dear boy, there's the devil of it. If I only had a topic I could do it in an hour"—a purely fallacious statement, seeing that no amount of topics would ever have induced him to do it single-handed at all.

Francillon would sometimes heave a sigh, and then with newly-lit cigars we would wend our way back to the old *Globe* office, where our working-room overlooked the chapel of the Savoy. By that time either Francillon or I had found a topic, for although I was then, and have since remained, a Liberal in politics, I found it not difficult, and sometimes even diverting, to engage in the advocacy of Conservative Policy in the service of our indolent friend.

Perhaps it was I who generally found the subject for the article, and when I announced it Purnell would reply, "Then begin, my dear boy; begin it, Carribus; the thing's done."

In those days a leading article always consisted of three paragraphs, and the three paragraphs of this authoritative statement on Conservative ideas were on these happy occasions divided between the three of us, Purnell always reserving to himself the conclusion, not because I think he had any special aptitude in bringing the argument to an end, but because it gave him a longer time to smoke his pipe before his turn came to set upon his task.

And so it came about that I having opened the debate, Francillon at the same time would be busily engaged in the discussion necessary for the central paragraph, while Purnell, looking over our shoulders with chuckling glee, and passing contentedly from chair to chair as he saw his task nearing its end, would finally be persuaded to sit down at his own desk and scribble about eight sentences which were supposed, by their invincible logic, to confirm and strengthen the Tory convictions of the city to which the article was to be despatched.

But hurry and scurry as we would, this terrible task was scarcely ever finished till within a few minutes of the time for post, and even then it often happened that one of us had to come to Purnell's rescue and try as best we could to adjust the scattered arguments which he had been vainly endeavouring to set in logical sequence.

His delight on these occasions was unbounded. The weekly price for these essays was three guineas,

and I think he received it with all the greater zest from the consciousness that he had not rightly earned it.

Purnell's social ambitions were few, and all social obligations he boldly repudiated. It was one of his most deeply seated convictions that no man was compelled to reply to any letter of invitation, whatever the source from which it might have come, and he defended this position with great show of legal force.

"If," he said, "a lady had asked me whether in the event of her writing me an invitation I would reply to it, and I had answered in the affirmative, then, my dear Carribus, the agreement would be complete. But I never said anything of the kind, never would; and therefore, my dear boy, there's no privity of contract."

But there was one invitation he took care to answer, an invitation to pass a week-end with a certain noble lord in the country. I do not think that he was in any grave sense a "snob," but he was deeply impressed with the sense of his powers of fascination over women, and his handsome picturesque face, I think, entitled him to the belief that it was not mere idle boasting.

At this particular party he happened to know that several charming ladies of the family would be present, and it was this fact, I think, which made him very eager, if he could, to accept the invitation. But the question of a fitting wardrobe raised a difficulty, and here again he threw himself in all candour upon Francillon and myself.

The rare letter of acceptance had been sent, and

the day for his departure had arrived, but in this question of dress he was still lamentably unprepared. We met in hasty consultation in a little eating-house called the Coal Hole, which lay down a narrow court at the south side of the Strand.

It was Saturday. The shops would soon be closing, and there was no time to lose. He had money enough for his railway ticket, but none for such idle luxuries as clothes. His only proffered contribution to the necessities of the occasion was a tarnished disreputable bag which he had brought down empty to the office in view of the projected excursion. He had no great faith in it himself, and it was discarded with scorn by those whom he had pressed into his service. And so in the end Francillon and I had to provide a modest valise and stock it with a wardrobe that would suffice for the three days' stay, and I can recall now the air of triumph with which he started upon his journey, robed in a new pilot-jacket which we had added as the final feature of his outfit.

Our little circle on the staff of the *Globe* was later joined by Churton Collins, now the Professor of English Literature at the University at Birmingham, then only a boy fresh from Oxford, but a boy whose mind was already stored with a knowledge of English literature such as I suppose few men of his generation can boast. His prodigious memory both in prose and poetry I certainly have never encountered in another; and through many an evening when he dined quietly with us in our rooms in Great Russell Street, did we wonder and delight to listen to him as he passed from

author to author, not always reciting things of his own choice, but responding with equal readiness to any call that might be made upon him when the choice was made by others.

But this wondrous memory sometimes played him tricks in his first essays as a journalist. For as there was no time and no opportunity in the *Globe* office to verify any quotation, his literary articles, which were always packed with quotations from the poets, were generally subject to correction in some small particular, and for this reason evoked a shower of correspondence which irritated and annoyed our worthy editor.

This same editor, on the other hand, was often a source of annoyance to *us*. Our time was short for the work we had to do during the morning, and we resented the constant pencil-notes which he used to send up from the room below, or the repeated calls up the speaking-tube, the whistle of which stood next to Purnell's desk.

One day we determined to mark our disapproval of this vexatious and harassing policy. We were accustomed sometimes, when money was short, to be content with a lunch of cocoa and biscuits prepared by ourselves. A kettle on this occasion stood puffing on the fire, and when the whistle of the speaking-tube had gone for about the thirtieth time, a demoniacal idea of vengeance entered into the mind of Purnell. The call this time was for me, and Purnell having answered that I was coming to speak in answer, went with stealthy steps towards the fireplace and seizing the kettle poured the whole of its contents down the tube.

It is not perhaps wonderful that this resulted in something like a crisis in the internal arrangements of the office, and very nearly ended in the dismissal of the entire literary staff.

Another comrade of those days, though he rarely wrote in the *Globe*, was Camille Barrère, now the distinguished Ambassador of the French Republic at Rome. Barrère and I were for many years close allies. I had assisted him in his first essay in English journalism when he contributed to the *Pall Mall Gazette* a series of articles on the Commune, with which he had been in some sense associated. He was always a brilliant and gifted creature, and his rapid advancement from the hour when he was first befriended by Gambetta could never have been any surprise to those who knew him well.

At that time, like the rest of us, he was having a hard struggle for life. We were together on the *Echo*, and together on the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and I can remember in the old days of the Arts Club how often we sat and planned vague, large schemes for the reorganisation of journalism, which should yield us more complacent editors and a rate of higher remuneration, which we fancied our merits deserved.

Barrère had passed some of his earlier years in England, and his knowledge and power over our tongue were remarkable, but now and then some small idiomatic fault would slip out unawares, and one day, when he had just received what he considered an inadequate cheque from the *Echo*, he cried out indignantly that he "would like to wring the throat of Arnold."

Unlike poor Purnell, the choice of a topic never presented any difficulty to him. Almost any subject served him for a light and graceful essay, and the fertility of his invention in this regard was more than remarkable. Happily for his own sake, and for the sake of the nation which he has served with so much distinction, he need no longer rack his brains, as in the old days, for the material that would fill a column in the *Echo*; and though it is many years since we met, I know, through many messages that I have received from him, that he looks back with kindly remembrances to those times when we struggled side by side.

It is a strange thing about a journalist's career, when it is successful, that at the first it seems so hard to get the work to do, and then later so hard to do the work that comes. In those early days every new opening was only won after a struggle, yet within a very few years I found myself almost overwhelmed by the tasks that were laid upon me.

From the *Globe* I passed to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, where I succeeded Professor Colvin as its Art Critic; from the *Pall Mall* to the *Saturday Review* and the *Examiner*; and then a little later I joined the staff of the *World*, which had recently been founded by Edmund Yates.

These different changes of occupation brought many new friends and many new editors, but of all those under whom I have served I think I should signalise Mr. Frederic Greenwood as by far the most inspiring to his contributors. Not that to be numbered among Mr. Greenwood's contributors always implied a peaceful career; he was an

autocratic commander, whose powerful personality loved to assert itself in every department of his paper, and he and I in those days had sharp encounters with regard to that particular arena of art criticism over which I thought I was entitled to exercise independent control.

But those differences are long forgotten, and the remembrance that survives is of a keen and ardent intelligence that communicated its own warmth of purpose to all who served under his banner.

Very different in type was Mr. Harwood, the editor of the *Saturday Review*. On the quiet evenings that I sometimes passed at his house in Regent's Park, when he would spend most of the time after dinner in playing on his violoncello, it seemed hardly possible to realise that he was the capable conductor of what was even then a mighty organ of public opinion.

I suppose that hardly any British journal has ever boasted among its contributors so many eminent men in so many varied ways of life as one could see gathered at the great annual dinner of the *Review* in the "Trafalgar" at Greenwich, presided over by Mr. Beresford Hope.

Mr. Harwood had succeeded Mr. Cook, and had inherited many of the traditions of the great founder of the *Review*. His editorial office at the time I joined him was situated in The Albany, where he was assisted as sub-editor by my old friend, Mr. Walter Herries Pollock, who afterwards succeeded to the editorial chair.

I did little of the more serious work upon the paper, my duties, as a rule, being confined to those

middle articles, as they were called, which formed at that time one of its salient features. I suppose the aptitude for finding and treating such lighter subjects was not too common; at any rate, I know that my contributions of that sort always met with a generous welcome, and Mr. Harwood himself, despite his grave exterior, was sometimes singularly happy in the choice of subjects for fit treatment in this lighter vein.

A young man who has gained an entry into the journalistic world can sometimes get through a prodigious amount of work, and at the time I am speaking of it often happened that within the week, besides my morning duties upon the *Globe*, I would furnish one, and sometimes two, articles to the *Saturday Review*, an article to the *Examiner*, another to the *World*, and, in addition, three or four columns of art criticism to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, apart from regular work in the same department for the *Manchester Guardian*, and occasional articles in other daily or weekly journals.

Mr. Edmund Yates, the founder and editor of the *World*, had given me a generous welcome from the first, and I recall an incident in connection with a series of articles I had done for him which at the time filled me with no little pride. In this series I had dealt week by week with the more important organs of the British press, and I was fortunate enough to win for these papers a considerable amount of attention. But, for the time, Edmund Yates had carefully withheld the secret of their authorship, and one day when I was visiting my old master at Bruce Castle School the subject

came into our conversation, and he told me that the report was about that they were written by a prominent leader-writer of the *Times*.

At this my pride could no longer contain itself, and his incredulity and astonishment when I announced myself as the author gave me a moment of the keenest pleasure.

Yates had many enemies in those days, and the new features which he had introduced into English journalism were in many quarters profoundly resented. But he was generous and warm-hearted to his friends, and beneath those lighter gifts which made for immediate success he possessed a deep, sincere love of literature. It was at his house that I first met the late Mr. Archibald Forbes, a man of rare force and grit, and possessed, as a writer, of a style of trenchant sincerity and power that in my opinion placed him easily at the head of that great race of special war-correspondents which may be said to have been founded by the late Sir William Russell. None of them all, however, could equal Sir William in social grace and readiness of wit. His store of anecdotes garnered from a rich experience of many men and many lands seemed ever inexhaustible and ever new.

Forbes was of a widely different type. His experience had been won in a harder school, but his rapid and vivid powers of expression, his ability to set forth in picturesque presentment events which had only just happened, were, I think, altogether unrivalled. When it is remembered that many of these descriptions were sent rushing over the wires at the close of a day when other men of

less energy would have been exhausted after many hours spent in the saddle, and when it is observed with what potent directness of narrative, often rising to real greatness of style, the story he had to tell was presented to his readers, it will be conceded, I think, that he had no equal in the particular branch of journalistic literature to which he had devoted himself.

We became close friends almost from our first meeting, which, as I remember, was on the occasion of a dinner given by Edmund Yates to the contributors to the *World*, and later, when I became editor to the *English Illustrated Magazine*, he rekindled some of the earlier memories of his fighting days in a series of articles that included a delightful account of the struggles which preceded his appointment as a special correspondent to the *Daily News*.

It was during the Franco-German War that the *Daily News* leapt into sudden prominence, in virtue of its splendid correspondence yielding a vivid picture of the conflict from both sides of the campaign, and it was incontestably to the energy and judgment of the late Sir John Robinson that this immediate success was due.

The quiet, kindly personality of Sir John would scarcely have suggested the sure and rapid power of organisation he undoubtedly possessed, and his quickness of insight in the selection of the fit man for the work to be done was vividly illustrated in the account which Mr. Forbes wrote for the *English Illustrated Magazine* of his first meeting with the genial manager of the *Daily News*.

It is possible that Forbes had somewhat embroidered the sober facts of the situation in order to heighten its picturesque effect, for I remember that on my next meeting with Sir John, after the publication of the article, he was somewhat whimsically annoyed to find that his own share in this historical transaction had been slightly disfigured to suit the exigencies of Mr. Forbes's narrative.

Forbes had asserted that at a point in the negotiations he conceived the idea that his services were not desired, and was leaving the office in disgust when Robinson ran after him and brought him back. It was this little piece of added embroidery that Sir John declared to be not absolutely historical, but I feel sure, at least, that Forbes never intended to do injustice to the manager of the *Daily News*, for in our many talks concerning his struggles at this time he always acknowledged how deeply he had been indebted to his great employer.

Another of the staff of the *Daily News* war-correspondents was Hilary Skinner, whose younger brother had been the dearest friend of my youth, from the time when we were schoolmates at Bruce Castle School.

Alan Skinner afterwards rose to a distinguished official position in the Straits Settlements, but at the time I am thinking of he had just been called to the Bar; and when I, at a later date, left school to begin my life in London, he and I passed many a long evening in the little set of chambers he occupied in Old Square, Lincoln's Inn. In those days he was a versifier like myself, and, failing a

wider audience, we used to delight to read to one another our first essays in poetry.

The friendship between us was of the closest, and when he finally went abroad to take up his official duties, the separation, I think, was felt keenly by both. His elder brother, Mr. Hilary Skinner was of a lighter temperament, though he must have possessed strong force of character to have endured the strenuous labours of a war-correspondent. A voluble and insatiable talker, his conversation never needed the provocation of a reply. In an endless stream of anecdote he would wander over a wide world of men and things, never halting for a word, and rarely halting at all. And yet the trials of the life he had adopted must have been a severe strain upon a constitution that was by no means robust, and I think the wear and tear of that life, though it was not long continued, set a permanent mark upon his health.

Certainly this was so in the case of Archibald Forbes, who suffered much during the later years of his life, suffering that had its origin, as he told me, in a terrible two days' ride in South Africa when he was racing against time to reach the telegraph-office to cable his news home.

Among others of this special race of correspondents who came into my life at this time were George Augustus Sala and William Beatty-Kingston. With both, however, the record of war was only a passing incident in their journalistic career.

Sala, I think, possessed a larger assortment of odd scraps of knowledge than any man I have ever met, and although his chequered career presented

many vicissitudes, he had cultivated, as he told me, from boyhood the habit of keeping a series of most carefully compiled commonplace books, in which were recorded, under headings sometimes quaintly chosen, every bit of information or historical allusion which even remotely bore upon the subject in hand.

He told me that in the wildest and most disordered periods in his career this habit had never deserted him, and one evening, when I was dining with him in Mecklenburg Square, he showed me one entire shelf packed with these little volumes, all written in the neatest of monkish hands, and almost without a blot or scar.

I have often wondered what has become of those note-books from which he drew such varied allusions for his characteristic articles in the *Daily Telegraph*. They would be a treasure-store to many a budding journalist, and as far as I could gather, from a rapid review of them during that one evening at his house, a delight even to the casual reader.

Sala, like his friend Yates, was an accomplished speaker, and a keen critic on all presumptuous pretenders in that department.

I remember one evening, coming away from a public banquet at which he had admirably distinguished himself, I ventured to ask him what he thought of the performance of a gentleman who had followed him, and who I knew rather prided himself upon his achievements in this particular direction.

"Oh!" said Sala in reply, "you mean so-and-so. Ah yes! Damned fluent, damned fool!" The comment sounds harsh, but I do not think it was

unjust. He used to tell me that in the preparation and delivery of his speeches there was always present to his mind the image of a furnished house, and that he kept his material in order and sequence by suggesting to himself, as he spoke, that he was inspecting the various apartments, from the dining-room to the attic, and that in this way he could always avoid any halt or confusion in the arrangement of the matter upon which he was speaking.

Yates, I fancy, though his delivery was always admirable in effect, was accustomed to learn his speeches by heart, and in this respect resembled the late Sir Frederick Leighton, though with the latter the secret was not so well kept.

William Beatty-Kingston, the last of the special correspondents to whom I referred, had no aptitude for public speaking, but he was in many ways highly accomplished. As an amateur musician I should think he had few equals, and his absolute enjoyment when he was seated at the piano, passing from the work of one great master to another, was a delight to witness. I remember that one evening my wife and I had invited to meet him a very gifted young Italian violinist, and it was a suggestion of ours that after dinner they should try over some of the duets of the great composers.

It was easy to see that at first they took no liking for one another. The Italian, as a recognised professional, hardly concealed his sense of superiority over the amateur, and Kingston, I knew, harboured a lurking suspicion that the violinist would not be deeply interested in the work of the great German composers to whom he was enthusiastically attached.

The brief passage of the dinner was for this reason a period of armed neutrality, amusing enough to watch; and when afterwards they were persuaded to make an adventure together it was done reluctantly, and with no great hope on the part of either that the evening would present any real enjoyment. It so happened, as they both knew, that my wife and I were bound to make an early departure for a great fancy-dress ball which had been organised by some of the foremost painters of the day, but of course we invited Kingston and his companion to stay as long as they liked, and leaving them with a sufficient store of whisky and soda and cigars, we set out upon our more frivolous excursion.

The ball was kept up till late; it was past five o'clock before we returned, little thinking to find our guests still in possession; and our surprise was the greater when, on mounting to our single sitting-room in Great Russell Street, we found, in the light of the sunshine that was streaming into the room, Kingston and his companion, both with coat and waistcoat removed, pounding away as hard as they could go at some difficult composition which they were trying over for the third time. The two artists, whom we had left with some misgiving in an attitude of veiled hostility towards each other, were now, as we discovered to our surprise, the closest friends, and, although the morning was well advanced, Kingston insisted that we should sit down and listen to one or two of the gems which they had been performing, and which were now repeated once more for our benefit—the most persuasive plea he urged being that in half an hour the public-houses would be open,

and that we could then replenish our slender store of whisky which they had already exhausted.

Kingston had been for some time a special correspondent to the *Daily Telegraph* in Berlin, and afterwards came to London as its foreign editor. Apart from his musical talent, he spoke with ease many foreign languages, and in this respect resembled Sala, whose facilities as a linguist were great, though, as he once confessed, he inclined by preference to the languages of the Latin races. As he himself picturesquely put it, "My tongue is hung in a Southern belfry."

Of all the editors with whom my journalistic experience brought me into contact, the man who stood nearest to me as a friend was Professor Minto of the *Examiner*.

On the *Examiner* I felt free and unfettered, free to choose any topic that pleased me, and to treat it in whatever way seemed to me best. I have always thought that Minto's great powers as a critic of literature have never been sufficiently recognised. His separate volumes on the Poetic Writers and the Prose Writers of England contain some of the best criticism of our time, and, in especial, the section in the former devoted to the tragedies of Shakespeare has hardly been equalled in fineness of perception and in sustained eloquence of style.

Though in many ways characteristically Scotch, he had a liberal and supple mind, with a wide grasp and a generous outlook on political affairs, and an appreciation even of lighter works of literature that was hardly to be suspected from his grave and sober personality.

Very delightful were the little smoking evenings he instituted in the offices of the *Examiner*, which were then situated near Wellington Street in the Strand. There it was that I first met the late Bishop Creighton, who was at the time a constant contributor to the paper. Theodore Watts-Dunton was also a pretty regular visitor on these simple social occasions, and there, too, I met that strangest of accomplished scholars, "Student Williams," who had long been known as an Oxford coach, and who was now devoting himself to a journalistic career.

It is strange to reflect what a complete revolution has overtaken English journalism in the period of thirty years that has passed since the time of which I am speaking. Literature and journalism have now almost parted company, and although the older tradition still honourably survives in individual instances, it is impossible not to be conscious that the function of a journalist, as it is now most widely accepted, has entirely changed its character.

The sort of article that was eagerly sought for then is now rarely welcomed, and when we recall the names of the men who wrote for the *Saturday Review*, and the great body of accomplished writers who lifted the *Pall Mall Gazette* in its earlier days into a foremost position among English journals, it will readily be conceded that the revolution is already complete. Reporting has largely taken the place of criticism, and the modern newspaper office, ordered on popular lines, more nearly approaches day by day to a powerful agency for private inquiry and detection.

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CHAPTER IV

THE BAR

WHILE this journalistic work was in its earliest stages, I was still seriously engaged in trying to fit myself for work at the Bar. My earlier knowledge of the Law had been gained under the tutorship of Professor Stewart Brice, who had successfully prepared me for my examination at the London University. And now, during the last six months of my studentship, I read in chambers with Charles Crompton, who was a prosperous Junior of the Northern Circuit. Charles Crompton had taken high honours at Cambridge, and was an accomplished lawyer; but his gift of speech was small, and would always have left him unfit for the higher honours of leadership. It was through his influence that I was elected as Junior to the Northern Circuit, which then covered a larger area than is assigned to it now. When I was Junior the towns visited included Appleby, Durham, Newcastle, Carlisle, Lancaster, Manchester, and Liverpool, and until I began to feel the pinch of the great expense which these Circuit tours involved, I keenly enjoyed every hour of the time in which, by my patient presence in the

Courts, I was endeavouring to master the principles of the Law.

But before I joined the Circuit, I had already received my first brief from a cousin who was desirous of encouraging me in my new career. I was to appear in the Divorce Court in an undefended case, and my cousin endeavoured to stiffen my nerves for the ordeal by assuring me that the proceedings would be merely formal and the verdict would follow as a matter of course.

It was before Lord Penzance that the trial took place, and when the pleadings had been opened and I had made the statement that the case was undefended, a voice from the well of the Court retorted in acrid tones, "I beg your pardon!" and then a little man rose whom I gathered, in my confusion, to be the respondent. My amazement and dismay are beyond words to describe, and if it had not been for the Judge, who realised the situation and came to my rescue, I think my first brief would have been my last.

As Junior of the Circuit I was brought into close contact with some of the greatest advocates of the time—Holker, Russell, Herschell, Sam Pope, among the leaders; Gully, Henn Collins, Bigham, and a host of others of the Junior Bar who have since risen to distinction. The present Lord Justice Kennedy joined the Circuit at the same time as myself, and we shared our lodgings in several of the northern towns.

The post of Junior rather attracted me. According to tradition, that officer is supposed to represent the interests of the Junior Bar, and it is

recognised as part of his duty on every occasion that offers that he should keep in check the superior pretensions of the Queen's Counsel.

As Junior also I was one of the recognised spokesmen for the Circuit on the occasion of all public banquets and entertainments; and I remember that it was at a dinner given by the late Lord Armstrong in his capacity as High Sheriff of the County, a dinner served in the great banqueting-hall at Jesmond Dene, the walls of which were richly decorated with many important examples of modern art, that I made my first essay as a public speaker.

But what interested me most keenly at the time was the opportunity which the daily working of the Courts afforded of appreciating and distinguishing the great talents of the men who then graced the Circuit.

The first who won my admiration, and it was not wonderful, was Charles Russell, and I remember, in the constant discussions which occupied the Junior end of our table at the evening mess, I always stoutly maintained that he would prove the greatest advocate in England.

He already possessed that dominating personality which was felt by Judge and Counsel alike, and an instance of his imperious temper came to me very early in our acquaintance. Though I had seen and admired him constantly in Court, I had not been introduced to him till I met him one evening in the rooms of Mr. M'Connell in the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. Russell was always a keen card-player, though I am assured by those who are

better able to judge, a player not distinguished by any exceptional skill. There were four of us present that evening, and Russell at once insisted that the table should be brought out for a rubber of whist. I nervously explained to him that I knew scarcely anything of the game, but my objection was curtly overborne in a manner that left me no alternative. By an unhappy fate Russell cut me as a partner, and the blunders which I had clearly foreseen must occur, endured at first with some semblance of equanimity, at last ended in an explosion of rebuke that only made the more inevitable a series of even worse blunders in the game to follow.

By this time Russell had lost all patience, and, to say the truth, so had I, and with a courage and audacity, which I certainly could not have exhibited had I then known him better, I pointed out to him that the fault was his own, that I had warned him of my incompetence, and yet in the face of that confession he had forced me to join in the game.

To my utter amazement he became suddenly gentle and self-controlled, and said, "Yes, yes, you're right. I had forgotten that. I had no business to speak to you like that."

Other instances of Russell's commanding personality, though they belong to a later time, come back to me now.

During the progress of the famous Belt trial, through the kindness of Sir George Lewis I one day found my way into Court; but I had scarcely taken my seat when Russell, with an imperious gesture, beckoned me to his side. "Carr," he said, "you know about Art?" and before I knew whither

his statement tended I found myself in the witness-box confronted with the two test busts on which the issue in the case mainly depended.

The last time we met in public was on the occasion of a dinner to be given to Sir Henry Irving on his return from America, when Sir Charles Russell was in the chair. As I entered the ante-room where the guests were assembled Russell took me by the lapel of my coat and drew me aside. "You ought to be doing this," he said. "You *can* do this sort of thing; I can't."

That portion of the statement which concerns himself was, at any rate, partly true. Russell was never quite at home in these lighter ways of oratory. It needed the pressure of a great issue to exhibit his powers of eloquence at their best, and even in the House of Commons I fancy he never quite justified his unrivalled position at the Bar.

But in that special gift of eloquence that makes for power in advocacy there was surely no man of his time who could claim to be his equal. Within the arena of the Court his personality imposed itself; in the stress of conflict it could even be menacing. It exercised its influence upon the jury; it was not unfelt upon the Bench. Like all great advocates, he was at his best when the gravity of the issue summoned all his resources. He was only fully inspired when his individuality was fully and deeply engaged, and for that he needed the spur of something definite, concrete, and individual. His gifts of oratory were conspicuous. In those northern Circuit days I used constantly to notice a greater freedom and picturesqueness of gesture, a more com-

plete surrender to a mood of passionate utterance than any of his fellows could command. These things were his in virtue of his birthright as an Irishman. But they were not at his service upon an issue that was coldly intellectual or remotely abstract. There was in his nature that purely combative element that could only find its full expression in the battle of litigation; the clash of ideas left him comparatively cold: he was so far an artist that he needed to be moved and stirred by facts that were moulded into a definite story of individual fortunes—then, and only then, the full force of his personality came into play. At such moments his strength far outmeasured the weight of gifts that were merely intellectual; such gifts, however considerable, were then enforced by qualities of character and even of temper very difficult to define but still more difficult to resist.

In after years he once told me that his habit had always been to prepare his cases chronologically. He wanted to know what was missing in the story he had to tell, to be prepared in anticipation for any surprise coming from the other side that might suddenly be brought to fill the vacant gaps in his own narrative. And this simple process of preparation showed itself in his methods as an advocate. His power of presenting his case had something of the charm a story-teller can command. It was always lucid, direct, and consecutive, never halting or confused. Sir William Gilbert once told me that on a certain occasion he was in Court listening to his own counsel opening to the jury the story of his own case. He said he was charmed, by the interest of the

narrative as it was gradually developed, and that the only criticism that occurred to him was that the substance of the speech bore no relation to the contention he had come into Court to establish. Such a reproach, I think, could never at any period in his career have been made against the late Lord Russell.

I did not at first recognise that Russell had in his constant opponent, John Holker, a man of intellectual power, as great, or perhaps even greater, than his own. Holker had little of the grace that Russell could boast; his personality was outwardly heavy and uncouth; his language, rarely eloquent, was sometimes even rough and halting. But in his grasp of every case presented to him, and in his power of imposing the view he sought to uphold upon a northern jury, even Russell was not his equal. A man of great physique, in person cumbrous and heavy, and in facial expression unalert and uninspiring, he sometimes gave to his hearers rather the impression of a giant talking in his sleep.

But as I watched him from day to day, it very soon became convincingly clear to me that the giant was there. He seemed to notice nothing, and yet nothing escaped him. His method of appeal to the jury had something almost of cunning in its apparent helplessness.

Even when he was nearing success, and the verdict was within his grasp, he still retained the air of a man whose cause was in danger owing to his inferior grace of style and his halting powers of eloquence. He had that persuasive art of convincing the jury that he was a plain man like them-

selves, and that the cause of justice was likely to suffer by reason of the superior intellectual attainments of his opponents, unless he and they laid their heads together as plain men, and stood shoulder to shoulder in earnest endeavour to vindicate the right.

It was only afterwards that I got to know that beneath this heavy and impenetrable exterior there lurked a keen and supple sense of humour. On the occasion of the annual Grand Night the leader who presided did not always take the personal trouble to invent or devise the sort of burlesque address interspersed with lyrical effusions which was deemed appropriate and indispensable. I remember my friends, the late Mr. M'Connell and Hugh Shield, who was known as the laureate of the Circuit, very often came to the assistance of the leader who felt himself unequipped for this lighter task imposed upon him.

But when it came to Holker's turn, despite the fact that he was engaged on nearly every case sent up for trial, he chose to do the whole himself, and very admirably it was done.

Herschell's intellect differed widely from both. In power of logical statement, in clear and coherent reasoning, and in the ability to conduct an argument without a flaw from start to finish, he was certainly not the inferior of either. But his nature on the emotional side, as far at least as advocacy was concerned, was poorly furnished. He lacked the warmth to sway a jury. He was unable to realise any disability in others that he did not possess in himself, and the consequence was that he had often concluded his address to the jury before these

unfortunate gentlemen had apprehended the essential features of the case he was trying to enforce. And for this reason his appeal as an advocate was far less potent than that of either of his two great rivals. The cold steel of his intellect never reached white heat. His eloquence lacked the picturesque adornments which in their different ways they could both command, and in this respect he stood in even more striking contrast with Sam Pope, who, in a brief flight of advocacy, once or twice impressed me more than them all.

The duties of the Junior of the Circuit sometimes placed me in somewhat ludicrous conflict with authority, and it happened that on my first Circuit I was forced, as the spokesman of the Bar, into a somewhat heated controversy with the Attorney-General, the late Lord Coleridge.

Charles Russell had been sent by the Crown with a special retainer to prosecute Mrs. Cotton, the notorious murderess who had poisoned a number of her nieces and nephews for the sake of small village insurances she had effected on their lives. This aroused the indignation of the Bar at Durham, who thought that Mr. Aspinall, who held the position of Attorney-General for the County, was entitled to the brief. And it was Herschell who prompted me in the letters of protest which I was instructed to send to Lord Coleridge, and which were afterwards published in the *Times*.

That same trial of Mrs. Cotton stands out vividly in my remembrance from among the many criminal cases which I have witnessed in the Courts. I remember Russell telling me afterwards that the

several cases actually proved against her, amounting, I think, to five or six, were only a few from among many others in which her guilt was equally assured; and yet, during her trial, this elderly woman, who in appearance resembled rather a comfortable monthly nurse, never evinced the smallest trace of emotion or concern.

It was proved that she had sat up night after night assiduously nursing her victims, as, one after another, they succumbed to the poison she had administered. And yet it was only when her advocate, whose case from the first was hopeless, endeavoured to appeal to the jury by a purely fanciful picture of her constant affection for these helpless children, that Mrs. Cotton—moved rather, as it would seem, by the artistic skill of his eloquence than by any deeper feeling—shed a few tears such as might have been wrung from a spectator at a play.

My own experiences as a barrister are too slight to deserve any record. Mainly through the kindly influence of Charles Crompton I appeared in one or two civil causes, but these were before an arbitrator and not in open court. Once, and once only, I was entrusted with a brief to defend a person who was accused of having stolen a moth-eaten pillow from a passing barrow containing the household effects of a neighbour who was shifting her quarters.

I was assured by my friends on Circuit that had I chosen to pursue my career I should have made an effective advocate. But the expenses incident to this side of my calling were already beginning to press heavily upon me; and as I was then almost

entirely dependent on what I could earn for myself, I rather grudged the constant drain upon my income as a journalist which my life at the Bar involved; and when in the month of July 1873 I became engaged to be married, I quickly perceived that the only speedy prospect of making a home for my wife was to devote the whole of my energies to literature and journalism, in which I had already made a successful start.

But the profession of the Law, so eagerly adopted and so speedily abandoned, has always had for me a strong fascination, and among its professors, both past and present, I have counted many of my closest friends.



Lucy Walker

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

From the portrait by himself in the National Portrait Gallery.

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CHAPTER V

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

I CAN hardly say what it was that gave to my early efforts in journalism a decided bent towards the study of Art; for although my first experiments, as I have already said, were made as a dramatic critic, I very soon found myself employing the best of my energies in another direction.

My elder sister had already begun a serious study of painting, and that no doubt partly influenced my taste as a boy. Not that my keen interest in the drama ever lapsed, even during the period when I was qualifying myself as an Art Critic; but it lay dormant for a time, in so far at least as my journalistic occupation was concerned; and apart from my daily work upon the *Globe*, and those lighter essays on general and social topics contributed to the *Examiner* and the *Saturday Review*, my main energies for several years to come were destined to be employed in the criticism of pictorial art.

It is not quite easy now to realise the extraordinary interest with which the annual exhibitions at the Royal Academy were then greeted by those whose minds had been awakened to the new movement in painting.

I can remember year after year, from the age of sixteen, presenting myself on each opening Monday at eight o'clock in the morning at the doors of Burlington House, and snatching an hour there before making my way to the City. The pre-Raphaelite movement had begotten a freshly awakened spirit, not only in the workers themselves, but in those who worshipped them. The advent of Ruskin had kindled a new flame which made a study of Art something more than mere dilettantism. It was with something almost of religious fervour that we awaited the advent of a new Millais or Holman Hunt, for it was then only on rare occasions that we had the chance of seeing an example of the work of Rossetti.

Art in more recent days has come to make, even in the hands of its greatest professors, a more technical appeal, and those of us who are not of the calling are now somewhat sternly bidden to confine ourselves to dumb appreciation, and are severely warned not to venture to deliver opinions on matters in which we are not qualified by special study.

This is the fate of all art, either literary or pictorial, at those seasons of impaired vitality when it falls under the domination of men of the "métier." It is the assured sign of a passing period of decadence. The moment when the artist has missed the spirit which links his work with the wider emotional movement of his generation, is always the moment when he most zealously and most loudly acclaims the detachment and independence of his calling.

He is always most eager to be judged by the comrades of his craft when he realises, though

perhaps only half consciously, that his appeal is no longer to the simple. It is the moment when art leans towards bric-a-brac, when the painter or the sculptor is no longer spurred by the larger desire to have his work understanded of the people, when he is content in each little coterie with the appreciation of his disciples who in their turn aim at nothing better than the approbation of their master. That any work worthy of the name, whether in literature, painting, or sculpture, must of necessity conform to the irrefutable laws of the medium in which it is expressed, is little better than an outworn platitude. But to concede so much is only to admit the inevitable limitations of every art; it is the acceptance of its inherent conditions, not the definition of its essence; and the endeavour to refuse to artists rightly equipped for their task the larger function of imaging the wider passions of life, is simply to rob the record of the past of its greatest and most enduring achievements.

For my own part I have never made any pretence of bowing before these inordinate pretensions of the masters of mere technique. They form part of a gospel that has always been widely preached: in my youthful day it spread upon its banner the specious motto of "Art for Art's sake"; but it reappears under many disguises, and rests ultimately and always upon the assumption that the men of the "métiér" are the sole and exclusive judges of the worth of any artistic product.

Certainly, if this dictum had prevailed in the time I am recalling, the great movement which won all our youthful enthusiasm, a movement beyond ques-

tion the greatest and most influential in the Art of Europe during the nineteenth century, would never have found strength to develop. Never did young men of their calling meet with more embittered opposition from the accepted masters of the time; and if it had not been that a true impulse inspiring their work stirred a deeper response in a section of the public than was accorded to them by their fellow-painters, they would most surely have lacked the encouragement and the praise which to every artist is as the breath of his life.

The thought and feeling of the time, as it found expression in every art, was moved by something deeper than the merely artistic impulse. That much-bespattered Victorian Era, whatever its limitations, could claim at least this cardinal virtue, that the men who are its foremost representatives were able to forge anew the links that bind life and art together. The gifts they owned were too great to let them stand in any fear of the threatened danger of "the literary idea"; and if occasionally they had to acknowledge a measure of failure, the fear of such failure never drove them to take refuge within the safe confines of mere technical accomplishment.

The spirit of poetry, re-awakened in literature, had found its way into art, and themselves the comrades of the poets of the time, the leaders of the little band whose efforts were destined to revolutionise English painting, gladly confessed in their own work, though in varying measure, the newly kindled ambition to embody in art that quality of imagination that had hitherto found expression only in literature.

And this movement towards a wider idealism was helped, not hindered, by the strenuous desire for the faithful presentment of actual reality which stood as a dominant article of faith in the pre-Raphaelite creed.

At the head of this revolution in taste, which has left a lasting mark, not only upon the painting of England, but also in some degree upon the art of all Continental nations, two names I think stand pre-eminent, those of G. F. Watts and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. From them came the poetic inspiration which lay at the root of all the greatest achievements of the time. Others there were, like Millais, more greatly endowed with the painter's gift, but even he, whose genius was destined ultimately to find its own more congenial exercise in portraiture and landscape, confessed in his earlier days the commanding domination of men who, in intellect and imagination, were his leaders and his masters.

The work of Mr. Watts, based on an earlier tradition, was open to all the world, but it was only by rare chance and good fortune that the student of that day had the opportunity of making acquaintance with the paintings of Rossetti. I remember it was while I was on Circuit that I had my first sight of some examples of his work in the collection of Mr. Rae of Birkenhead, and there, too, I found pictures of Madox Brown, another of the group who did not publicly exhibit. I think it was a study of Mr. Rae's collection that induced me to publish in the *Globe* newspaper a series of articles on painters of the day over the signature of "Ignotus" in the year 1873.

Certainly it was the publication of these papers

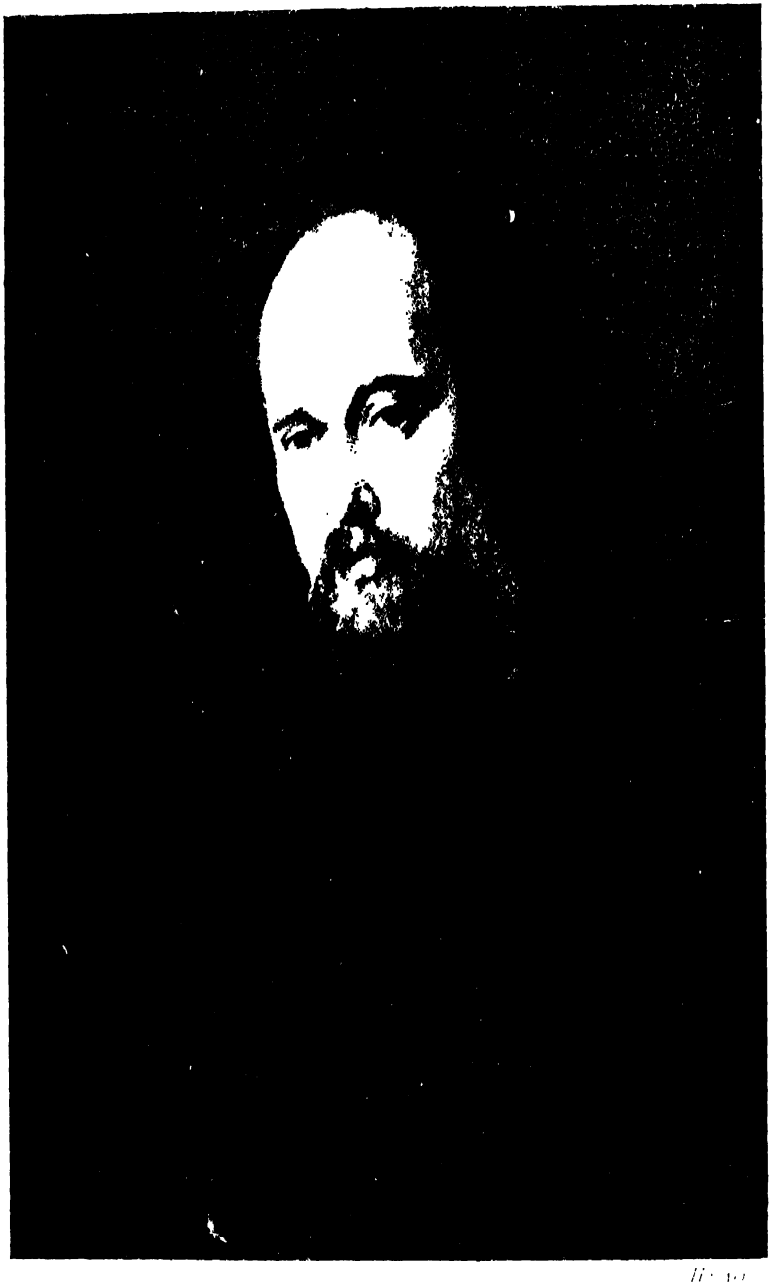
that formed the occasion of my making the acquaintance of several of the artists whose talent I had endeavoured to appreciate. It was my intention at the time to refashion the series and to issue them as a separate volume, and with that view I wrote to several of them asking them for some personal details of the earlier days of their studentship. The answers I received were in nearly every case characteristic, and it was by means of my correspondence with Rossetti that I afterwards became a visitor at his house.

It was through my friend Mr. George Hake, who was at that time staying with him, that I first obtained a personal introduction to Rossetti, but we were already known to each other by correspondence.

In his letter to me dated from Kelmscott in November 1873 he writes: "As a painter, and I am ashamed at my age to say it, I have never even approached satisfaction with my own progress until within the last five years. My youth was spent chiefly in planning and designing, and whether I shall still have time to do anything I cannot tell."

As a matter of fact, Rossetti had at that date produced most of the work by which he will be best remembered. As a lad of twenty he had painted "The Girlhood of Mary the Virgin," followed shortly afterwards by "The Annunciation"; and some of the most beautiful of his drawings, the exquisite portrait of "Miss Siddal," the "Hamlet and Ophelia," and the large drawing of "Helen arming Paris," already stood to his credit.

At the time I first knew him he had already painted "The Loving Cup," "The Beloved," "Mona



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DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

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Vanna," and "Lady Lilith," and in the earlier part of the period to which these works belonged he had given to the world that exquisite series of water-colour paintings in which "Paolo and Francesca" and "Heart of the Night" stand pre-eminent.

It was "The Beloved" and "Mona Vanna" that I particularly remember as forming part of the collection of Mr. Rae, and it was mainly upon these two paintings, and a knowledge of some of the drawings in *Black and White*, that I had founded my first enthusiastic appreciation of the painter's genius.

The common impression of the time, which I indeed partly shared, was that Rossetti's individuality, however finely it might be endowed with poetic imagination, was not of the most virile order. For this he himself was in a great degree responsible. He had deliberately withdrawn from all public exhibition of his work, and even later, when I became connected with the establishment of the Grosvenor Gallery, he still held fast to his earlier resolution.

The man, as I came to know him in the flesh, was therefore something of a surprise to me, and I quickly perceived, as I learned to know him better, that, whatever may have been the source of his reluctance to expose himself to the fire of criticism, it certainly was not due to any lack of masculine strength.

On the occasion of my first visit to Cheyne Walk, it was indeed the breadth of his sympathy both in literature and art, no less than the fineness and delicacy of his taste, that most impressed me. Those never-to-be-forgotten evenings that I passed

in his company became at the time a sort of enchantment. His talk was assuredly more inspiring than that of any man I have ever known; most inspiring certainly to a youth who had ambitions of his own, for, although intolerant of any utterance that was merely conventional, and quick to detect the smallest lack of sincerity, he was ever patient with the expression of any enthusiasm however crude, and was as ready to listen as to reply.

I can see him now as he used to lie coiled up on the sofa in his studio after dinner, and can hear the deep tones of his rich voice as he ranged widely over the fields of literature and art, always trenchant, always earnest, yet now and again slipping with sudden wit and humour into a lighter vein.

I remember that one afternoon as I sat beside him while he worked, the late Mr. Virtue Tebbs came in fresh from an exhibition of the old masters at Burlington House, and full of enthusiasm for a picture by Turner which he insisted that Rossetti must speedily go and see.

"What is it called?" asked Rossetti.

"'Girls Surprised while Bathing,'" replied Tebbs.

"Umph!" returned Rossetti. "Yes, I should think devilish surprised to see what Turner had made of them."

On one point he was always absolutely emphatic.

"A picture," he used to say to me, "is a painted poem, and those who deny it have simply no poetry in their nature." It was, I think, the absence of this quality that made him intolerant of the work of artists like Albert Moore.

"Often pretty," he said, "pretty enough, but sublimated café-painting and nothing more."

But he could be unstintedly generous in his praise, as he was searching and even scathing in his criticism. Of Millais he once said to me:

"I don't believe since painting began there has ever been a man more greatly endowed with the mere painter's power."

And of Burne-Jones, not once, but often, he spoke in terms of the warmest and highest praise.

"He has oceans of imagination," he used to say, "and in this respect there has been nobody like him since Botticelli." And then, reverting to his favourite maxim, he added in those round and ringing tones that seemed at once to invite and to defy contradiction: "If, as I hold, the noblest picture is a painted poem, then I say that in the whole history of art there has never been a painter more greatly gifted with poetic invention."

Of Leighton he was wont to speak with genuine respect and sincere appreciation. There was only one point, and that concerned not the character but the manners of the graceful and accomplished President, on which he was not quite tolerant.

"Leighton," he said one night, "is undoubtedly one of the most gifted and accomplished creatures of his time. There's scarcely anything which he can't do, and can't do well. He has, besides, a very high sense of duty which I know to be sincere, and even as a painter he undoubtedly deserves to some extent the position he occupies, but as to manners——"

And then in a few trenchant sentences he would

give his own, not very flattering, impression of what he considered to be Leighton's imperfections on this score.

At the simple dinners to which I was at that time hospitably bidden, Rossetti, as he sat at the head of his table, was always amusing to watch. His inability to serve any dish set before him was pathetic in its helplessness. He would lunge at a joint as though it were a hostile foe, driving it from one end of the dish to the other till he got it securely cornered in its well of gravy, and then plunge his knife into it with something of deadly ferocity.

It is related of Rossetti, though I myself was not a witness to the incident, that on one occasion he was so entirely oblivious of the contents of the dish before him, that, wishing to prove its value as a specimen of oriental porcelain, he turned it over to examine the marks on its back, and all unconsciously deposited the turbot on the table-cloth.

I remember he very greatly admired some literary review which I had published in the columns of the *Globe*, the subject of which I now forget; and in the talk that followed he spoke with rare eloquence of the poets of the dawn of the last century, dwelling especially upon Keats, whom he knew I loved deeply, and coming at last to Landor, whose work, however beautiful, has never warmly appealed to me.

"What do you think of Landor?" he inquired.

I answered, "It seems to me through all his poetry that his genius is impersonal without being dramatic," and Rossetti, who was always generous

in his appreciation of youth, answered with a phrase that sent me home that night happy and contented.

"By Jove," he said, "that's the finest criticism ever made on Landor!"

I make no pretence that it was: it was enough for me then that he thought so, or that he said so.

But this friendship with Rossetti, so dearly prized by me and so indelible in its lasting impression, was not destined to endure for long. During the later days of our association he was already to some extent a sick man. Little by little the invitations, once so freely extended to me, slackened in their warmth of hospitality, until the day came when I realised the fact that my visits to Cheyne Walk were no longer welcome. It was not until years afterwards that I learned the cause, and if I give it here, it is only because it curiously illustrates that almost morbid sensitiveness of character which lay side by side in his nature with the most masculine grasp of the problems of life and art.

He had, it seems, as I had learned from the lips of a friend whose devotion to the poet endured till his death, a very high opinion of my judgment as an art critic, and he had conceived the belief, perhaps true at the time, that I thought more highly of the work of Burne-Jones than of his own. And although he himself had often said to me things of Burne-Jones's genius which no word of mine could out-measure in generous praise, it fretted him, in the supersensitive condition in which suffering and ill-health had consigned him, to be reminded by my presence of a judgment that in his own person he would not have resented.

It may, as I have said, have been true then—though I was unaware that I had ever betrayed the feeling to Rossetti—that Burne-Jones stood foremost in my appreciation of the painters of the time. It is certainly not true now in any sense that would consign Rossetti to an inferior place; for I have come to think, in the light of later study of the two men's work, that, in some undefinable and yet indisputable quality of genius, especially as exemplified in his earlier work not then so well known to me, he stands pre-eminent among those who influenced his generation.

As a colourist in that supreme sense in which colour is inspired by the purpose of the design, he had in his earlier period no equal among them all. In later life, under the shadow of suffering and sickness, the tones he employed had lost the first glowing radiance of the dawn. But an artist lives only by his best; and if the best of Rossetti be fairly measured and appraised, it will, I think, be hardly possible to dispute his right and claim to have been the foremost leader in the movement with which his name is associated.

CHAPTER VI

EDWARD BURNE-JONES

My intimacy with Burne-Jones struck deeper and lasted without interruption from those earlier days of the "Ignotus" articles in the *Globe* to the time of his death in 1898. We were friends for more than twenty-five years, and during the greater part of that period the closest and most affectionate friends.

To him also I had written when I thought of enlarging that first crude criticism of his work. I was a stranger to him then, although my elder sister had already made his acquaintance, but his letter in reply to my application is delightful in its considerate tolerance towards the somewhat audacious challenge of a boy to be supplied with the particulars of his early career.

Referring to the pictures which I had specially selected for notice he writes:

"I need not say that such a flattering review of them gave me pleasure, for, whatever cause I have to see them with disappointment, such sympathy as you express cannot be anything but most welcome. But there is so little to say of the kind of information you ask for, and I should like to say

nothing, for a sudden feeling of being ridiculous overwhelms me. At Oxford till twenty-three, therefore no right to begin art at all, never having learnt one bit about it practically, nor till that time having seen any ancient picture at all to my remembrance. Provincial life at home, at Oxford prints of Chalons and Landseer—you know them all. I think Morris's friendship began everything for me, everything that I afterwards cared for. When I left Oxford I got to know Rossetti, whose friendship I sought and obtained. He is, as you know, the most generous of men to the young. I could not bear with the young man's dreadful sensitiveness and intolerable conceit as he did with mine. He taught me practically all I ever learned; afterwards I made a method for myself to suit my nature. He gave me courage to commit myself to imagination without shame, a thing both good and bad for me. It was Watts much later who compelled me to try and draw better. I quarrel now with Morris about Art. He journeys to Iceland and I to Italy, which is a symbol. And I quarrel too with Rossetti. If I could travel backward, I think my heart's desire would take me to Florence in the time of Botticelli. I do feel out of time and place, and think you should let me go crumbling and mouldering on, for I am not fit for much else but a museum. You see I am writing in front of my work and ought to know, and I do know."

The letter ends with a courteous invitation to visit his studio, where he promised to show me the work he had completed during the year. Needless to say with what delight I accepted, though I

scarcely realised then that that visit was destined to date the beginning of a friendship that endured without halt or flaw till the time of his death in the summer of 1898.

When I first knew him in 1873, his appearance corresponded almost exactly with that which is imaged in Watts's beautiful portrait. His eyes then, as always, were the dominant feature of his face —pale blue eyes, that revealed in their changing expression the sympathy, the gentleness, and no less the strength, of his nature.

From the time I am speaking of, I became a constant and always welcome visitor to his studio at the Grange, and at those simple Sunday luncheons to which his intimate friends were bidden Burne-Jones very soon made known to me a side of his character scarcely to be suspected by those who knew him only from his work.

Playful and humorous, boylike, and even child-like in his quick surrender to the laughing mood of the moment, he could nevertheless become swiftly serious at the summons of some deeper thought, and without the need of any prepared process of transition could shift with ready and earnest eloquence to the discussion of those deeper problems which touched the centre of his art.

From the outset we were in close agreement as to the dominating tendencies which governed the great schools of European painting, and no less in our common preference for the great tradition of Florentine design, established by the genius of Giotto and culminating in the splendid achievement of Michael Angelo. Years afterwards, when I had

sent him a little volume of my gathered essays on Art, he wrote me: "I found your book when I got home last night, and it was a real pleasure for me to have another proof of your love and sympathy. And there will be this additional pleasure about it, that I know how heartily I shall be at one with you while I read it." And then, with a sudden turn to a lighter mood, he adds: "We shall meet on Sunday at lunch. Georgie is away, but Margaret dispenses lower middle-class hospitality with a finish and calm which would not disgrace a higher social position."

I suppose no man ever held with such unswerving fidelity to the ideal with which he set out upon his career, an ideal as plainly manifest in those earlier contributions to the old Water-Colour Society as in his last great picture of "Arthur in Avalon." In him the sense of design was all in all, but mere abstract design that missed the impulse of some legend of passion or romance never quite contented his genius.

It was his delight, as it was the delight of Botticelli, to be always exercising his invention upon some theme of legendary beauty; and it was his special gift, as indeed it was also Botticelli's, to be able to translate such themes into the appropriate language of Art.

Though he could appreciate at its true value excellence in almost every school of painting, his temper turned as by instinct even from the greatest masters who sought only for a faithful rendering of nature. Blake once said that in his highest moments of inspiration he was often haunted by those "Flemish Demons," as he termed them, who

came and blurred his imagination and stole away the thought he desired to present. I think Burne-Jones was sometimes haunted by them too.

It is not needful now to revive the memories of that fierce hostility of criticism which greeted his earlier efforts. Rossetti's determined reticence in regard to the exhibition of his work left Burne-Jones in those earlier days to bear the whole brunt of the attack, for the art of Millais and Holman Hunt made a somewhat different appeal and claimed a separate victory. Nor was it wonderful that what lay in the mind of both to do should at first have seemed tinged by something of determined archaic affectation. The temper of their work was strange to the world to whom it was offered at first in a form so tentative, and also confessedly so incomplete.

The history of English Painting, even in its greatest achievement, has left no tradition to which they could appeal, and. indeed, if we take a wider range of view, it may be said with equal truth that, since the downfall of the great school of Florence, Art throughout Europe had taken a direction which made the efforts of these younger men seem like a wilful neglect of the accepted models of style.

Such English masters of an earlier time as had attempted to enter into this higher realm of imaginative painting—Barry, Fuseli, and Haydon, to name only the leaders—had wrecked their lives in the vain endeavour suddenly to renew the splendours of the great masters of the sixteenth century.

With the advent of the pre-Raphaelite movement, marked by a determined research of greater reality in the rendering of actual fact, the failure of these

earlier experiments became only the more manifest; and it was left for that little group in which Rossetti and Burne-Jones stand pre-eminent to realise the truth that, if imagination could ever again resume its place in pictorial art, the result must be achieved, not by an endeavour to repeat the triumphs of the past at the epoch of its culminating glory, but by retracing the stream to its source and beginning again, where Florence had begun in the earlier period of her history.

It was, I think, the first exhibition of the Grosvenor Gallery that gave Burne-Jones's critics reason to pause in their pitiless onslaught of ridicule and rebuke. But even then the fight was not ended, and among the many members of the Academy itself the hostility continued almost without check.

I remember going round that exhibition with Mr. Gladstone, and recalling a phrase of his which he used in reference to this very feeling that was even then sufficiently openly expressed.

Standing before one of Burne-Jones's pictures which he was warmly admiring, he turned to me and said, "Dislike of such a painter I can understand, but such intolerance of dislike as I find on every hand I do not comprehend."

It was, perhaps, difficult, even for those to whom such work made a sympathetic appeal, to realise what a broad and liberal outlook in Literature, as well as in Art, belonged to the painter whose deliberate selection of a chosen type of beauty might plausibly seem to argue a narrow intelligence; and it was, indeed, only by close and intimate knowledge

of the man himself that one was enabled to escape altogether from this initial prejudice.

As a talker he was wholly delightful. There were few subjects in literature upon which those who might have thought to convict him of a narrow intensity of feeling could have dared to challenge him with success. It was natural, perhaps, that, with his preoccupation as a painter, his love should have turned most often and most readily to legend and romance. But in romance his task took a wide range, and it will surprise many, who see how rigorously all suggestion of humour is excluded from his paintings, to learn that his knowledge of Dickens was almost encyclopædic, and his love of him, like that of Mr. Swinburne, without limit of praise.

As our friendship advanced it came to be our custom to meet periodically at a little restaurant in Soho, over a quiet dinner which we boasted was to be a mere preliminary to "seeing Life"; but these evenings nearly always ended as they began, in talk over the table—light and laughing to commence, and then drifting finally into deep and earnest discussion of the things we loved the best in Poetry and Art; until, the lights gradually extinguished, we were reminded that the closing hour had come, and that the projected visit to the music-hall, which was to constitute our vision of Life, must needs be postponed until another occasion.

And so these meetings went on from time to time, but never without a word of mock indignant protest on his part that he had been cheated of a promised debauch. Once he fired my imagination by telling me that he had made a solitary visit to

the Aquarium, where he had seen "The Last Supper" tattooed on a man's back, and this taste of blood had whetted his appetite for more salient examples of monstrosity which were at that time being exhibited in Barnum's Show.

An appointment made for the purpose I was compelled to abandon by reason of a social engagement with my wife, a circumstance which drew from him a little note of pitying sympathy:

"Carr Mio, so you have thrown me over! Well, perhaps you are right; at any rate I am wrong to have trusted. I confess I marvelled at your bravery in so openly defying woman, but knew that you must be justified in some consciousness of strength. But lo! you are even as I, who boasted not. Still, we will have Barnum another night. I *must* see the fat lady, and *will*."

And then on the facing page he adds a monstrous portrait of that lady herself, a thing of unimagined wealth of flesh, seated on a velvet cushion before the upturned eyes of a crowded theatre.

Burne-Jones was wont to be lavish of these humorous sketches in letters to his intimate friends, and I have one or two supposed to illustrate a projected fresh departure in his Art, wherein, under the impulse of a new resolve, he was to abandon finally all future effort after ideal design, and, conforming to that taste of the public which he had hitherto failed to satisfy, to embark upon a series of pictures to represent, as he told me, the homes of England.

"I enclose a sketch," he writes, "for my next picture It is a new departure, but the public

I enclose a sketch for my next picture - it is a new departure but the public must be honoured - I have forgotten the spell of my speaking long enough - tell me what you think

And give my love to Joe & Phil & Polly and the baby.

and I am Yours affectionately

EBJ

Saturday evening

[illegible] WEST KENSINGTON, W

My dear Mr Comyns Carr

After I sent off the letter, I repented me - for my proposal was cruel and unprovoked; the composer of the impertinent - of course the evening can be changed - and some other evening in the same month desirable & happy Company will come about, when I have by exhausted its reaction (most reasonable reaction) & dwell with me.

FACSIMILE OF A LETTER

By Sir Edward Burne-Jones Bart. R.A.



THE HOMES OF ENGLAND

From a original drawing by Sir EDWARD BURNE-JONES, Bart. &c.

To face page 71.

my heart & is the work –

also the facing will do very well. but it looks a serious work and will take much time – but despair not Tom alone

E.B.J.



THE HOMES OF ENGLAND

From an original drawing by Sir EDWARD BURNE-JONES, Bart. &c.

must be humoured. I have fought the fight of unpopularity long enough. Tell me what you think," and accompanying this startling announcement of the fresh direction his art was to take, he enclosed, not a mere sketch, but an elaborately finished black and white drawing of the first of the great series he had projected, wherein he had evidently intended to present a typical representative of our great commercial nation—a hideous being stretched in stertorous sleep upon a Victorian sofa of abominable design, every deformed curve and moulding of which he had rendered with searching veracity.

I must have sent him in reply some burlesque welcome of the revolution in his style indicated by the design, for in a day or two I received a second drawing more monstrous and grotesque than the first, and with the drawing he wrote: "You divine my purpose. It was the first of a series to be called the Homes of England."

But even in these essays in the grotesque, and in the lighter and sometimes very graceful fancies which he would illustrate so easily and so rapidly for our amusement, or for the delight of our children, there was always an unfailing sense of composition and design.

One afternoon on the lawn of Lady Lewis's cottage at Walton, where we often met, and where so many happy hours of my life have been spent, he was discussing in a bantering mood the reproach so often levelled against him, that his female forms were lean and meagre and lacked the sense of flesh and blood.

"I think," he said, "I must make a more determined study of the manner of Rubens," and thereupon, taking a sheet of paper from the table where Lady Lewis was writing, he began at once to compose a picture of "Susannah and the Elders," after the manner of the great Flemish master. It took him only a few minutes to accomplish, and yet, as it lies before me now, admirable as it is in its sense of caricature, it is no less striking for a certain beauty in the ordered arrangement of line which could not desert him even when he was proposing to lampoon himself.

It was, I think, about the same time that he laughingly proposed to instruct my eldest boy in the principles of anatomy, and there and then made for him on the spur of the moment two beautiful drawings representing the anatomy of the good man and the good woman, to which he added, by special request, a third drawing illustrating the anatomy of the bad man. On being met with the reproach that the drawing showed nothing of the details of internal structure, he replied that there were none, as "the bad man was quite hollow"; and on being further challenged to illustrate the anatomy of the bad woman, he gravely replied, "My dear Phil, she doesn't exist."

In later days the little Bohemian meetings to which I have referred, at first restricted to our two selves, took occasionally the form of larger hospitality. Sometimes Sir George and Lady Lewis, and sometimes Sir Lawrence Tadema and his wife, would join our party.

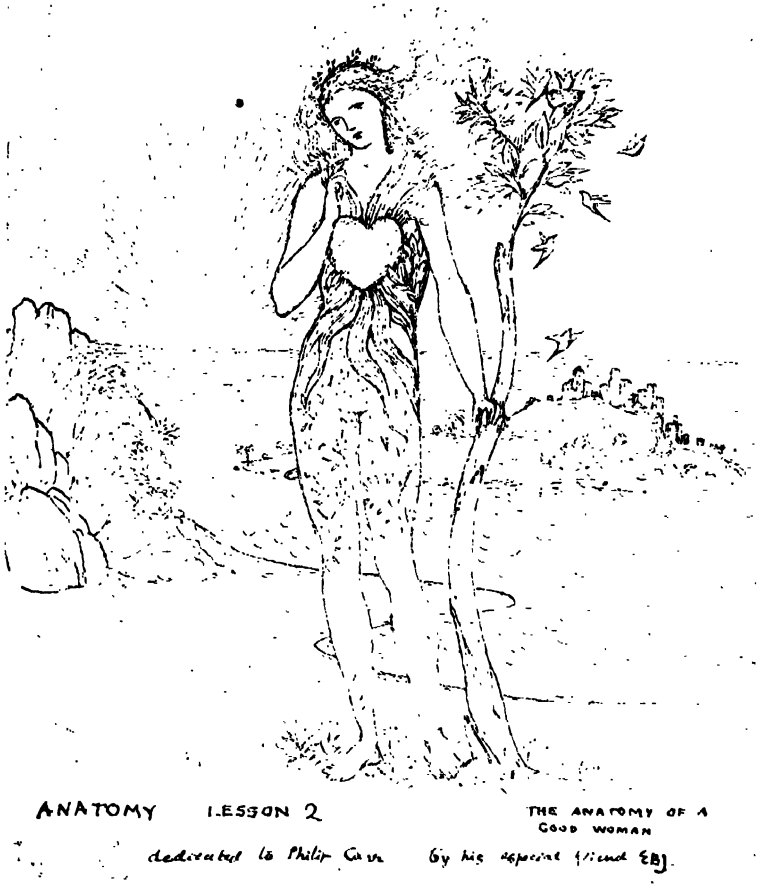
On such evenings, to mark the added dignity to



LESSONS IN ANATOMY

From an original drawing by Sir EDWARD BURNE-JONES, Bart.

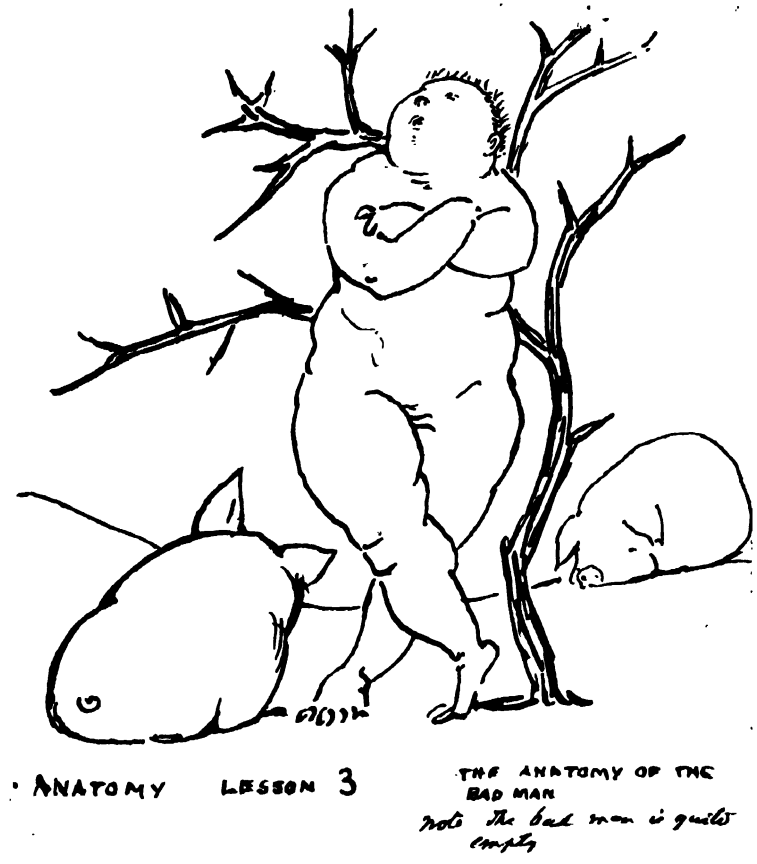
To face page 80.



LESSONS IN ANATOMY

From an original drawing by Sir EDWARD BURNE-JONES, Bart.

To face page 80.



LESSONS IN ANATOMY

From an original drawing by Sir EDWARD BURNE-JONES, Bart.

To face page 60.

the occasion, we shifted our quarters to Previtale's, and I have known no merrier hours before or since than those we passed together.

Burne-Jones always made a grave pretence of being quite ignorant as to what should be ordered for these little feasts. Of one of them, where he was to be the host, he wrote to me some few days before imploring me in a spirit of mock despair to come to his rescue and arrange the *menu*.

"I no more know," he cries, "what dinner to order than the cat on the hearth as I write—less, for it would promptly order mice. Oh, Carr, save my honour and order for me a nice dinner so that I may not be quoted as a warning of meanness! I am not mean. Order apples of gold on plates of silver, and let the wine be scented and brought from Lebanon; but not a mean dinner, nor yet ostentatious or presuming, or such a one as could possibly compete with the banquets of the affluent. My honour is in your hands. Oh, Carr, come to the rescue!"

It is extraordinary, in view of the concentrated energy he bestowed upon his work, how readily and how generously he always responded to the appeal of his friends. There was no demand they could make upon him which he seemed unable to satisfy, no help which the youngest or the most modest student could ask of him which he was not always ready and willing to give; and yet all these gifts of friendship so lavishly bestowed were never allowed to interfere with the absolute devotion that he owed and that he paid to his art.

Behind the affectionate gentleness of his nature, that was susceptible to every influence, there lay a

faith that nothing could shake or weaken. In its service he was prepared to make all sacrifice of time and strength and labour. His friends claimed much of him, and he yielded it. Generous both in act and thought, there was probably no man of such concentrated purpose who ever placed himself so freely at the service of those he loved. But there was no friend of them all, and there were many who could claim perhaps a closer alliance than I, who could cause him to swerve for a moment from the labour that was his life.

One of the last letters I received from him must have concerned another of these little feasts which he had projected and which for some reason I was compelled to postpone. I cannot now recall what I then wrote to him, but I suppose my letter must have contained some reference to our long and close friendship, for I received from him in reply an affectionate little note that it is a pleasure to me to preserve.

"Dear Carr," he writes, "I too feel just the same. I want years and years of us together, and much work and a little play. We will put it off for a week, then, and I will try and rearrange, and perhaps Tadema will join.—Yours affectionately, E. B. J."

Those "years and years" that would have been so dear to us were unhappily denied. He was often ailing in the later days of his life, and it was easy to perceive that he was sometimes apprehensive as to the condition of his health. And yet he never allowed his own anxieties to burden others. On one occasion I remember, and it must have been

about this time, he told me he had been to see his doctor, who had questioned him closely as to his habits as a smoker.

"How many cigars do you smoke in a day?" he had inquired of his patient, to which Burne-Jones had carelessly replied:

"Oh, I think about six."

"Well," replied his adviser, "for the present you had better limit yourself to three."

And in detailing the incident to me afterwards Burne-Jones added with a chuckle:

"You know, my dear Carr, I never did smoke more than three."

When the end came, and came so swiftly, he left a gap in my life I well knew could never be filled again. I had not seen quite so much of him during the last three or four years of his life, but immediately preceding that period we had been closely associated in a task that lay very near my heart. I had asked him, with Irving's concurrence, to undertake the designing of the scenery and costumes for my play of *King Arthur*, produced in 1894. At his request I went down to read him the play while he was at work in the garden studio of the Grange, and at its conclusion he announced, to my great delight, that he would willingly undertake the work. The subject was congenial to him; he was deeply versed in all Arthurian lore, and in his paintings he returned again and again to that great cycle of romance enshrined for English readers in the exquisite prose poem of Sir Thomas Malory.

We met often and intimately during the progress of preparation, and I remember his almost childlike

delight when we mounted to the painting-room at the Lyceum—where Hawes Craven was transferring to a wider canvas his beautiful design for the scene of the Queen's Maying—as he insisted in taking from the scenic artist a brush of giant dimensions, and executing a passage in one corner of the back-cloth so that he might be able to boast, as he laughingly declared to Craven, that he had partly painted the scene himself.



CHAPTER VII

MILLAIS AND LEIGHTON

MILLAIS was not one of those to whom I had written after the publication of my article upon his work, and it was not till later at the Arts Club that I learned to know him personally.

Perhaps I refrained from addressing him at the time because I was conscious that my criticism could not be altogether agreeable to him, and I felt that I could hardly demand any assistance in the prosecution of my labours from one whose talent I had so severely handled.

Looking back now upon that youthful essay it seems to me, in the light of later knowledge and appreciation, to be disfigured to an extraordinary degree by arrogance of statement and intolerance of judgment. My mind had been so completely captured by the innate poetical feeling that marked the work of Rossetti and Burne-Jones, that I was then scarcely ready to rank at their true value the splendid powers which Millais possessed. I could only think at the time, with something approaching resentment, of Millais's apparent desertion of the ideal that inspired his earlier efforts, and I was not able to perceive that, in the line of development

which he had followed, he was only conforming with absolute loyalty to the natural bent of his genius.

It was the accident of youth which set him for a while under the influence of men of a deeper spiritual tendency, and it was not his fault, nor indeed our misfortune, that when the period of youth had passed he should have applied himself with ever-increasing earnestness to the development of those gifts in portraiture and in landscape which have left him pre-eminent among the painters of our school.

At the time I was not able to judge fairly of the causes which led to his ultimate desertion of those earlier ideals, and I could only remember with a regret, too harshly expressed, that we were no longer to expect of him another "Huguenot" or "Ophelia," or to welcome again from his hand such achievements as the "Carpenter's Shop" or the "Feast of Lorenzo."

But a knowledge of the man himself very speedily enabled me to take a juster view of his place as a painter. There are artists in every line, in literature as well as in painting, whose personality does not willingly associate itself with their work. This was certainly true of Browning, who would seem in social intercourse to be almost perversely desirous of enabling you to forget that he was a poet, and it was true no less of Millais, who rather sought by preference in his leisure hours the companionship of men who were not concerned with the art he professed.

Millais had about him, as I first recall him, and retained to the end of his life, even in the days that



THE FINDING OF MOSES BY PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER.

From *Leaves of the Holy Land.*

By Sir J. E. Millais, Bart., P.R.A.

Engraved by the Brothers Dalziel.

(Reproduced from their *Fifty Years' Work.*)

were passed under the shadow of a mortal sickness, a delightful buoyancy of character that was enchaining and infectious. In his view of his own art there was occasionally something of the victorious arrogance of a school-boy who has lately carried off the first prize, an arrogance that was nevertheless consistent with a deep modesty of character that showed itself in his reverent attitude towards nature, where he was ever ready to admit that he had found his rival and his master.

As far as my own experience of him went, he was never very eager to discuss the work of his contemporaries, although he could be amply generous on occasion towards the earlier experiments of younger men. When he referred to the works of the older masters it seemed to me that there was something of defiant challenge in his tone, as though he were ready to do battle with any one of them in his own person and in his own painting.

Of the men with whom his career had been so closely linked in the earlier days of his studentship he spoke but little, but even in the little that he said I always felt there was an underlying conviction on his part that, as a painter, he had easily outstripped them all. And perhaps he was right. That, at least, was Rossetti's opinion, as I have already stated, nor is it possible, I think, in fairly reviewing the art of his time, not to set Millais, in virtue of his powers as a mere craftsman, in a place beyond the reach of rivalry.

It was difficult at the period when I first made Millais's acquaintance to realise that the earlier stages of his career had sometimes yielded periods

of deep depression, and yet it is only necessary to turn to his own letters, written in the earlier part of the year 1859, to realise how, for a while at least, discouragement sat heavily upon him. And it is no less characteristic to note how swiftly that darker mood passed, for in the letter dated May 16 of that same year he says, "I have now enough commissions to last me all next year, so I am quite happy." And then a little later, though he had received no vote at the Academy election, he adds in his characteristically confident temper, "It's really a matter of entire indifference to me, as my position is as good as any except Landseer's, and this they too well know."

The charm of Millais's nature, with its swift alternation between absolute confidence in his own powers—in the form of its expression sometimes verging upon harmless arrogance—and those rarer moods of discouragement and self-abasement, was aptly imaged in his person and bearing. I have been told by one who knew him in his youth that he had the beauty of an Adonis, and even in the year 1875, when I first met him, his appearance was singularly handsome and attractive.

The frankness of his outlook upon the world was aptly mirrored in his face—eyes that were keen yet kindly, and a mouth delicately sensitive for all its firmness, forming the essential features in a countenance that could not fail to win both sympathy and regard.

Occasionally in walking home with him from the Club he would tell me something of the men he had known well in an earlier period of his life, but for

the most part it was not especially of painters that he spoke. Talking in this way of Thackeray and Dickens, and other notabilities of their time, he remarked to me that "the greatest gentleman of them all was John Leech"; and then, for a quarter of an hour or more, he ran on in affectionate appreciation of the great caricaturist, enlarging upon the extraordinary fascination and charm of his manner and the delicate refinement of his nature.

When the time came for the gathered exhibition of his work in the Grosvenor Gallery, I saw Millais more often and more intimately. Day by day, as Hallé and I were engaged in arranging the pictures upon the walls, Millais would come in with his short wooden pipe in his mouth and wander round examining the rich record of his own career; sometimes elated to the verge of enthusiasm, and sometimes as frankly confessing his own dissatisfaction with this work or that. Taking me by the arm one day he drew me round the room, and pausing before the "Knight Errant" he said:

"You know, Carr, as I look at these things there are some of them which seem to say to me, 'Millais, you're a fine painter,' and this is one"—pointing as he spoke to the beautiful picture before us—"and there are others," he added, his tones suddenly changing from triumph to dejection, "that tell me just as plainly, 'Millais, you're a damned vulgar fellow!' Oh, but there are!" he cried, as though anticipating my polite protest. "If you don't believe me, look at that," and he pointed to a picture I need not now name, but which he looked at with unfeigned resentment and disgust.

There was one little incident connected with that exhibition which I shall not readily forget. After many efforts, at first unsuccessful, we had at last persuaded the owner of "The Huguenot" to lend it for the occasion; but this favourable answer to our request only reached us when the rest of the exhibition was already arranged. It so chanced that Millais had not seen the picture since the year 1852 when it was painted, and he was therefore particularly anxious that it should be included in the exhibition.

It was late in the evening when the picture arrived in its case from Preston; but Millais had waited, evidently in some trepidation as to how this first triumph of his youth would impress him when he saw it again. Its place had been reserved on the wall, and the carpenters, quickly unscrewing the case, held up the picture for the painter to see.

Millais was standing beside me as they hurried forward in their work, and I felt his arm tremble on my shoulder during the few moments that prefaced its appearance; and then, when at last it was raised to its place, he said in a voice that was half broken by emotion, "Well, well, not so damned bad for a youngster." And lighting his little wooden pipe hurried out of the Gallery and took his way downstairs into the street.

In later days we met constantly in the card-room at the Garrick, and as we both lived in Kensington it happened often that we used to walk homeward together. Sometimes I would come across him in the daytime strolling in Kensington Gardens, and I remember one snowy Sunday in winter when I

had carelessly said to him, "How ugly snow is!" Millais turned to me with sudden vehemence and said, "Carr, how can you say that? Nothing in nature is ugly." And I think to him it was as he said.

I know at the time I was forcibly reminded of a phrase used by Constable which betrays the same unfailing faith in nature. "There is nothing," said the earlier painter, "either beautiful or ugly but light and shade makes it so."

The power of selection in the facts he chose to render was never among the strongest of Millais's artistic gifts; perhaps to him the need of it seemed not so great as to others. His mastery in the rendering of every aspect of reality, a mastery exercised with impartial regard upon the facts of human form or the complex growth of outward nature, was so complete, and so completely enjoyed, that he had scarcely the inclination to reject any one part of the subject presented to him in favour of another.

His art knew little preference, and for that reason it often lacked the higher sense of composition that painters, differently though perhaps not so greatly gifted, can command for their work. And so it was that the spiritual appeal of his painting varied extraordinarily according to the degree in which the theme had inspired him, and even more according to the measure of support which he received from the chosen model before his eyes.

And yet, to the last, that inspiration, when it came, could summon, almost undimmed, all that concentrated power in the rendering of life, animate and

inanimate, that had set so clear a stamp upon those beautiful paintings of the period of his youth.

Lovable I think he was in an extraordinary degree to all who were brought in contact with him, and I know for my own part that as I knew him more, I was the more attracted by his personality. At the last, as he lay dying in Palace Gate, he sent a message to say he would like to see me, but when I reached the house his son greeted me at the door with the sad verdict that it was too late. Already the hand of Death was upon him: within a few hours he had passed away.

There is one element of Millais's painting which, I think, has never received a full measure of appreciation. Apart from his superb gifts as a painter, he possessed a distinctive mastery in the rendering of certain phases of human emotion that has left him without a rival among the living or the dead. His fine powers as a draughtsman enabled him to press into a single face a quality of sentiment that, by reason of its exquisite delicacy of expression, was saved from the reproach of any sentimentalism.

The desire to capture this deeper beauty in character lay always resident in his nature, but it needed the inspiration of some rarer type of feminine loveliness to quicken it into life. In this sense Millais was to some extent, as I have said, at the mercy of his model, but when that model served him well—as in the case of "The Huguenots" and "Ophelia"—the result yields an image of some indefinable beauty in human character that adds to his innate gifts as a realist a deeper and more passionate truth.



THE HUGUENOT

From the picture by Sir J. E. Millais, Part., P.R.A.

It would be difficult to cite any other master of our school, or indeed of any school, who possessed this special power in quite the same degree. Reynolds and Gainsborough have left examples in the region of female portraiture that render in almost matchless perfection the permanent facts of gentle character; and the different kinds of beauty which they have saved for us bear the unmistakable stamp of a type that is national as well as individual.

But with Millais, whose art no less than theirs rests finally upon this power of interpreting individual features, there was sometimes added, when the model and the subject combined to inspire him, this finer grace of delicate and tender feeling which no one of his predecessors could command. Though not a constant quality of his art, it reappeared from time to time during the whole of his career. He never parted with it as he had parted with that earlier quality of design, which he had only shared for a while with men to whom it was all in all. Though intermittent in its manifestation, it remained with him to the end, and constituted a rare attribute of his art which belonged to him by right of nature and belonged to him alone. It was the appreciation of this quality which caused Watts to write to him in 1878 in regard to "The Bride of Lammermoor," which had received a decoration in Paris: "Lucy Ashton's mouth is worthy of any number of medals." And what is true here is true in a supreme degree of the face of the lady in "The Huguenots" and the face of "Ophelia."

The contrast between Millais and Leighton, both as regards individual character and the character of

their art, was as striking as could be presented by two men of the same generation.

Millais's manner was spontaneous, careless, and buoyant; Leighton was ever graceful and courteous, but never quite without the sense of conscious and deliberate effort. I remember an Italian painter who had been his friend for many years saying to me one day, "Leighton wills to be a good fellow," and I think the criticism that is here conveyed very aptly describes, or suggests, a certain feeling of constraint that was always to be felt in Leighton's companionship.

Despite all his accomplishments and grace he left the impression that he was never quite at ease, and as though he felt that that must be the plight of others as well as himself he seemed to be constantly striving to rid his companion of an embarrassment which was often only his own.

The essential difference between the two men was made very manifest by an incident that occurred at a dinner given by the Arts Club to celebrate Leighton's election as President of the Royal Academy.

Leighton's speech, of course, was expected to be the speech of the evening, and so in a sense it was. But Leighton never spoke without the polished preparation of every word, and though his gifts as an orator were conspicuous, there was always, even upon the happiest occasion, a sense of something artificial in his aptly chosen phrases; and on the evening of which I am thinking, the fact of his being fast bound and fettered by a string of carefully

forged and graceful sentences proved disastrous to the speaker.

Before Leighton rose to make his acknowledgment of the compliment that had been paid to him, Millais had his part in the programme to discharge, and although he could never boast any considerable gifts as a speaker, there was a directness and simplicity in his utterances that placed his audience in quick sympathy with the man.

When I complimented him afterwards he replied, "Yes, my boy, but you see I had a story to tell."

And so he had; but that was not the whole secret of the great impression he made upon his hearers that evening, for though the story was simple enough in itself, it was told with such genuine feeling and with such frank revelation of his own character that it moved his audience not a little.

He recalled a day of his youth when he had been summoned by Mr. Thackeray, who lay ill in bed, to receive some instructions for designs that Millais was making for the *Cornhill Magazine*. The business ended, Mr. Thackeray turned to him and said:

"Millais, my boy, you must look to your laurels. There's a young fellow in Rome called Leighton who is making prodigious strides in his art. He speaks every European language, and is an accomplished musician as well. If I'm not mistaken that young man will one day be President of the Royal Academy."

And then Millais turned to us, and in words of the simplest candour confessed that Mr. Thackeray's prophecy had somewhat hurt him—"For I will own,"

he said, "that at that time, with the ambition of a boy, I cherished the hope that *I* might some day be President of the Royal Academy." And then after a pause he added, "But now, looking back, I can say, 'Mr. Thackeray, you were right, and the right man has been chosen.'"

It is not easy to convey the effect which that speech made upon the crowded audience, most of whom were artists, but the depth of the impression was shortly realised when Leighton rose to respond.

It would have been impossible for any speaker born to his task to have followed Millais without betraying in response a sensibility to those deeper chords of feeling which his simple words had touched. But Leighton was incapable of resuming the unfinished melody Millais had so finely tuned; incapable by his habit and temperament of discarding what he had prepared; and so it happened that the discourse he delivered, though no less perfect and polished than was his wont, left his audience gravely disappointed and wholly unmoved.

Of Leighton I had also written in those earlier articles in a manner perhaps that showed too little consideration for his great gifts and great accomplishments, but he was characteristically courteous in his reply to my request for some particulars of the days of his studentship, and the pains he had evidently taken to assist me as far as he could in the project I had in hand bears strong witness to that ungrudging demand he always made upon himself when any duty came before him. He wrote:



LORD LEIGHTON, P.R.A.

From the painting by G. F. Watts, in the National Portrait Gallery.

To face page

Thursday, Nov. 27, 1873.

DEAR SIR—I should have answered your letter sooner had I been more master of my time. I am divided between my readiness to serve you and my embarrassment as to how to satisfy your request concerning my past life of which you already possess the outline. I find on looking at *Men of the Time* that the facts there given under my name are copied from the *Illustrated London News*, to which I furnished some such skeleton to accompany the customary portrait on my election to membership in the Royal Academy. They are accurate, barring misprints, such as calling my old friend Robert Fleury, Robert Henry. I hardly know what I can add without egotistic display to this account of a life in which, whilst there has been, and, as I hope, still is, steady growth and development, there had been no peripateia.

I scarcely have any earlier recollection than a passionate wish and a firm purpose to be an artist, and having become one, I have never failed or swerved from my deep desire to leave behind me something in Art which should be not ignoble in its aim, and in which Form and Style, the highest attributes of Form, should be chiefly sought, and I may own to a hope, which has not been much fed by experience, that I might in some degree disseminate my artistic faith in this country where the seed is little and the soil rocky, and where what is to me vital and essential in Art is generally either repudiated or held a matter of obsolete dilettantism.

The only apparent change in my work, the change from mediævalism to classicism, is in reality no change but only a development.

The love of mediævalism, the youth of Art, which is almost invariably found in youths, was strengthened and nourished in me partly by an early love for Florence and Tuscan art in which all grace is embodied, and partly by the example of my master Steinle, for whom I had, and have retained, a great reverence, and who was

fervently mediæval. For a long time I treated none but subjects from the Italian Middle Ages—going to history, Dante, Boccaccio, and preferring in Shakespeare the Italian plays. (I have sometimes wondered, by the bye, that the atmosphere of Faust and the Niebelungen Lied and the worship of Cornelius, in which, as a German student, I lived for many years, should really have left so little mark on my work.)

By degrees, however, my growing love for Form made me intolerant of the restraint and exigencies of costume, and led me more and more, and finally, to a class of subjects, or, more accurately, to a set of conditions, in which supreme scope is left to pure artistic qualities, in which no form is imposed upon the artist by the tailor, but in which every form is made obedient to the conception of the design he has in hand. These conditions classic subjects afford, and as vehicles, therefore, of abstract form, which is a thing not of one time but of all time, these subjects can never be obsolete, and though to many they are a dead letter, they can never be an anachronism.

But you did not ask me for a profession of faith. You see, meanwhile, that though shifted to another channel the stream of my artistic life has remained the same.

The dominant personal influence of my early development is that of my dear master Steinle, under whom I worked at Frankfort for several years. His stamp is still upon me, and I owe him a debt of gratitude for guidance, restraint, and upholding in the search of whatever is elevated, and for example of steadfastness and singleness of heart which I cannot ever repay.

One word more in candour. I have written these few lines because, unless my memory deceives me, you have written about Art with a sense at least of its place and dignity—a grace too rare amongst English critics; but I do not therefore accept entire solidarity with your standpoint, with which in some respects I am much at variance.

If there is any special point concerning which you care to inquire I shall be happy to answer.—I am, dear sir, faithfully yours, FRED LEIGHTON.

P.S.—Having lived much abroad during my young years, the years when one is wax, I have been in turn, thoroughly and sincerely, an Italian artist, a German artist, and a French artist. I need not say that, though every man is of a nation (and I am most emphatically an Englishman), all Art *intentionally* national is an error to my thinking. But I think I have gained in balance and insight by my varied experience.

It is not possible to question the justice of this brief record of his aims in Art with which Leighton so courteously supplied me, and that he never swerved from his fidelity to those aims may be generously acknowledged even by those who were never deeply moved by his painting.

If he failed to reach the goal towards which he was ever striving, it was from no lack of persistent purpose or earnest faith; and the courage and devotion which he exhibited in his life as an artist were no less manifest in the discharge of every duty which his high official position called upon him to perform.

I was an occasional visitor to his studio for many years after this first introduction to him in 1873, but I cannot boast of ever having been, in any true sense of the word, his friend. To my temperament he was a man easy to know, but difficult to know well; of unfailing kindness in any service demanded of him, but with no quick link of sympathy to encourage a closer intimacy.

Gifted with an appearance at once imposing and

picturesque, it was impossible not to agree with Millais that the choice of the Academy when they elected him as their President was rightly made. For all the official duties that are attached to that office he was admirably equipped, but it was difficult in ordinary converse to feel that he had ever quite thrown off his official garb.

Even in those earlier days, before he became President, he was apt in his bearing to convey the feeling that he was playing a part. His mind seemed always to move in some carefully chosen raiment which it was impossible for his nature ever wholly to discard.

As he said in the postscript of his letter, "I have been in turn thoroughly and sincerely an Italian artist, a German artist, and a French artist"; and so in his life he was in turn thoroughly and sincerely either a polished member of society or the careless Bohemian.

I remember once noticing him in the stalls of the Palais-Royal Theatre in Paris habited in a brown velveteen jacket, and suggesting to me that he was in this way resuming the days of his studentship in the Quartier Latin. His appearance on that evening seemed to me a little characteristic of the man. But among the many phases of his varied life, the sense of his personality as an artist was always uppermost; and however distinguished might be the throng of fashionable visitors who filled his studio, the entry of any one who had any call upon him as an artist would at once claim his attention.

To his older friends I know he was untiring in his devotion, and one of them once told me that at a

little Christmas party in a remote quarter of London to which he had been bidden, nearly all the other guests kept away by reason of a severe snowstorm, but that Leighton turned up faithful to his appointment, having walked all the way from Kensington to keep his engagement.



CHAPTER VIII

FREDERICK WALKER

I THINK it was a criticism of Sidney Colvin's in the *Pall Mall Gazette* upon his picture called "The Plough" that first drew me to a closer study of Fred Walker's work. Sidney Colvin had preceded me as Art Critic of the *Pall Mall*, and I am very conscious that in my first efforts in art criticism I closely modelled myself upon his style.

He and Bernal Payne had already done much to direct public attention to the new movement in Art before I entered the field. And it was not wonderful, in view of Colvin's eloquent advocacy of the men whom I most deeply admired, that I should have been drawn to the art of Fred Walker, whose talent he had particularly distinguished.

A little later I got to know Walker himself, but he was difficult to know well, not by reason of any deliberate reserve, but because of an unconquerable shyness which was deeply rooted in his character. Shy in his ordinary converse as a man, he was no less so in regard to his pictures. As one entered his studio he would always turn the work upon which he was engaged with its face to the wall, and



A WOMAN IN THE SNOW

From *Good Words*.

By FREDERICK WALKER, A.R.A., R.W.S.

Engraved by the Brothers Dalziel
(Reproduced from their *Fifty Years' Work*.)

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could rarely be induced to allow his visitor any glimpse of it.

Shortly after his death, which occurred in 1875, I wrote the introductory note to the catalogue of his collected works exhibited in Bond Street, and, wishing for some closer knowledge of the man than I could boast, I had recourse to Mr. George Leslie, who had known him long and well.

I find an interesting letter of his written to me about that time, and concerning, among many other things, Walker's stay in Algiers, where he had gone for his health. Leslie had asked me to meet Miss Jeykell, who had been in Algiers at the time, but as I was unable to accept his invitation he very kindly jotted down for me some notes of his conversation with her, adding at the same time some interesting reflections upon Walker's character which throw much light upon his temperament as an artist.

"Miss Jeykell," he writes to me in a letter dated February 10, 1876, "was there with Madam Bodichon when Walker arrived, and came home with him. She says that nothing could have exceeded his delight on arriving, with the light, bright climate and the novelty of everything, and he had immediately a great wish to send for his sister to come out and live there. But very soon, in about a fortnight or three weeks, his strong family affections began to tell on him and he grew terribly home-sick, and gradually took a sort of horror for the whole place. This feeling grew and grew on him, and he became quite ill. He longed to be back in England. With almost despair he said if he could only be in a hansom cab once again he should

be quite happy. Madam Bodichon and Miss Jeykell one day took him out with them for a driving excursion round the country and along the sea-shore, and this, she said, seemed to be one of the only days he enjoyed thoroughly. The shores were very picturesque and rocky, and they visited beautiful little bays of pure sand and quaint shells, where Fred Walker strolled about and seemed very much struck, no doubt contemplating his intended picture.

"They left him alone when he seemed to wish it, and he sat gazing at the rocks and sea in deep thought. He had his flute with him, and would accompany Miss Jeykell, who used to sing. She said, what I can endorse myself, that he played in a manner quite peculiar, full of tender feeling and prettiness.

"Finally his illness and his growing disgust of the place grew so much worse that they got quite anxious about him, and when Miss Jeykell and her companion were about to return home they proposed to take him with them. In a perfectly helpless way he eagerly accepted the kindness, allowing them to do everything for him, even packing his pictures for him, securing his passage, and paying his bills, etc. He went on board the steamer so ill that Miss Jeykell felt anxious about him, fearing he might not survive till he reached home.

"But the morning after they started, when she had gone to look for him in his cabin, she found him walking the deck in his little shooting-jacket, and quite revived with the idea of home. He relapsed, however, in his journey through France,

and the hatred of Algiers returned at the very sound of the French tongue.

"They arrived, however, quite safely at last, and Miss Jeykell at Charing Cross Station said, 'There, Mr. Walker, is a hansom cab.' He got in, waved his hand in a playful excited way, and that was the last time she ever saw him."

And then follows a very interesting comparison between the characters of Fred Walker and Sir Edwin Landseer, which Mr. Leslie was well qualified to make, as he had known them both for many years.

"I used to see them both," he writes, "for several years during the same time, and so was always being reminded one of the other. They were both disposed to be a little tyrannical in disposition; they both expected everything to be done for them. They were both extremely sensitive to criticism and public opinion, and they both possessed a tender and intense feeling for music.

"Walker could not play before friends, as the tears would run down his cheeks, and I have heard Landseer sing with the tears in his eyes. Landseer had not much voice, but a very sweet pathetic feeling. They both had strong family affections, and each possessed a devoted sister who ministered to their every want.

"They each had the same reluctance to show their pictures. Even when they had gone to the Exhibition, they would fret and worry and make themselves ill as to what would be thought of them. They both possessed an intense ambition to excel in Art. Walker once confessed to me that he

meant to be *the* best artist, or the 'very top,' as he said, and Landseer had quite the same ruling passion.

"They both had a keen sense of humour, and both drew admirable caricatures. Landseer would, with three or four lines, give you the very essence of any one's face, and you know how well poor Fred Walker did this. They were both very silent about Art, or rather about pictures; they neither of them had very much education, but somehow were far more neat in their choice of words than most other artists.

"They both were extremely fastidious in their work, altering and altering again and again; often a picture took up a year or two.

"Lastly, in dress they were something alike, both very fond of rather a sporting style, and indeed they were both decided sportsmen in taste. They were both, too, when I knew them, tinged with a kind of despairing feeling of melancholy, not of a slow languishing kind, but with a quick intense fever, covered over with a pretty sparkle of wit and cheerfulness when in the society of friends. The thing that always struck me about Walker and Landseer was, that the young man of thirty was like the other of sixty, and I have often said to Marks, 'He could never live, he has already arrived at what is the end of Landseer.'"

Poor Walker died in 1875 at the early age of thirty-five. He had exhibited once in the Royal Academy after his return from Algiers, and it was while his picture was hanging upon the walls at Burlington House that we heard of his sudden

death, due to a violent chill he had contracted during a fishing excursion in Scotland.

It was not very long before his death that I paid my last visit to his studio, and although, as was his custom, the canvas upon which he was engaged was speedily wheeled round and turned with its face to the wall, I caught just a glimpse of his subject, which afterwards formed the matter of our talk. It was to be called "The Unknown Land," and it is characteristic of the whole bent of his talent, and of the special way in which his imagination worked, that the last of his designs, left a mere fragment at the date of his death, was no more than a development of a drawing which he had contributed years before to the pages of *Once a Week*.

But it is to be acknowledged that Walker was never prolific in his inventions in the ordinary sense of the term. Nothing is more remarkable in his gradual progress than the strong and enduring attachment he displayed to certain motives in composition that at first found expression in his boyhood. As his art advanced, this inspiration of his earlier days was taken up again and enforced with all the riper resources of his manhood.

His great picture of "The Bathers" must have already been suggested to him by one of a series of illustrations representing the seasons which had also appeared in the pages of *Once a Week*, and many another instance might be cited which would tend to show the strong allegiance of his maturity to ideas which had first won his devotion as a boy.

Mr. Leslie's vivid sketch of Walker, and his just appreciation of his character, corresponds closely

enough with the man as I knew him in the later days of his life. He seemed to me to be always to the last degree fastidious in his own judgment upon his work, and so exacting in his demands upon himself that I think it was from this source there sprang up the disinclination which he always showed to submitting his pictures to the criticism of others.

The struggle he went through with himself in endeavouring to carry to a successful issue the thought that had formed in his brain was so severe that it left him, when the task was complete, with no courage to face an opinion which might, as he feared, be even less favourable than his own.

But although he shunned any discussion upon pictures painted by himself, he was, as I recall him now, always eager and enthusiastic in his talk of the wider and more general ideals of Art, enthusiastic also in his occasional references to those among his contemporaries whom he specially admired. Looking back upon his achievement now, it is easy to perceive, and it would be folly not to acknowledge, that some of that higher beauty which he sought to find in those rustic subjects that were dear to him was occasionally imposed upon reality by a conscious and wilful reference to the beauty of the antique.

But even if this criticism be admittedly just, his claims as a painter remain undisturbed. The added grace that he bestowed upon reality was resident in nature itself, and there is reason to think that if time had allowed his powers to be fully developed he would have achieved what he sought without direct dependence upon classic example. The two separate elements of his art—his direct



LUCY GRAY, OR SOLITUDE

To-night will be a stormy night,
You to the town must go,
And take the lantern, child, to light
Your mother through the snow.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

By Sir JOHN GILBERT, R.A., P.R.W.S.

Engraved by the Brothers Dalziel.

(Reproduced from their *Fifty Years' Work.*)

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and searching study of the facts of the actual world, and his passionate love of the beauty of the antique —were in process of being united but they were not yet absolutely fused in one. His early death left the story of his art life incomplete, but there is enough and more than enough to vindicate his position in our school.

On the occasion of one of my rare visits to his studio he had given me some brief account of the first years of his studentship. When he first quitted school at the age of sixteen he occupied himself in copying from the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum. For a while his purely artistic studies were interrupted by his apprenticeship to an architect, but after only eighteen months of labour that was never congenial to him we find him once more at the Museum, while during the evenings of this period he attended the classes in Leigh's School in Newman Street, making there the acquaintance of several other young artists with whom he remained on terms of closest friendship during the rest of his life.

A little later he entered the school of the Royal Academy, and about the same time began to employ himself with drawing on the wood which he learnt from Mr. T. W. Whymper, in whose establishment he remained for a period of three years.

At that date Sir John Gilbert was the accepted model for young men who desired to succeed in book illustration, and I remember Walker telling me that in all his earlier essays he was rigidly held to a strict conformity with Gilbert's style. But it was not long before he formed a method of his own, and,

soon after *Once a Week* was established in 1859, Walker became a constant contributor to its pages. Later again he sought and found employment from Mr. Thackeray on the *Cornhill Magazine*, where he illustrated the editor's own story of *Philip*.

He used often to tell me of his visits to Thackeray's house, where he went to settle with the great novelist the subject of the next illustration. During a considerable part of the time Thackeray was ill and confined to his room, and the young draughtsman would sit at the side of the bed and listen to the details of the story as they came from Thackeray's own lips.



THE UNJUST JUDGE

From *The Parables of our Lord.*

By Sir J. E. Millais, Bart., P.R.A.

Engraved by the Brothers Dalziel.
(Reproduced from their *Fifty Years' Work.*)

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CHAPTER IX

DESIGN AND ENGRAVING

It was inevitable that the new movement in Art, with its deeper research of truth in the rendering of human form and the facts of outward nature, should have led to a renewed study of certain forgotten qualities of design. And it is, indeed, impossible to understand the aim and impulse of the leaders of this new movement without reference to the engraved work of the time. It was a necessity of the straitened means which affected nearly all of them that they should at first employ themselves in the work of illustration, and there is no higher tribute to the genius which this new spirit had evoked than is to be found in the engraved work that was produced in England during the ten or fifteen years dating from the middle fifties.

When he was little more than a boy, and before he had gained any accomplishment as a painter, Rossetti had already produced some beautiful work in black and white, and we know from their published illustrations that Millais and Holman Hunt were already striving in the same direction.

The first important display of this renewed energy in design is to be found in the illustrated

edition of Tennyson's *Poems* published in 1857, for there, side by side with much that belongs to an earlier manner, the drawings of Hunt and Millais and Rossetti stand out with vivid distinctness as a separate achievement. Not that even at that time these three artists ought to be considered as actuated by a single motive; the individuality of each had been already asserted, and it was hardly necessary for Mr. Hunt in his recently published *Reminiscences* to labour the point that the aims of Rossetti were not in their essence the aims of Millais and himself. Nor, on the other hand, can the supremacy of Rossetti in regard to imaginative impulse and power be rightly challenged by any one who has had the opportunity of studying the work of the time.

It is not easy to perceive the motive of those who seek so hotly to contest Rossetti's influence upon his fellows. The very fact that Millais's art, and even, though in a lesser degree, the art of Mr. Holman Hunt, took afterwards a different direction, is rather to be taken as evidence that in some of the essays of these earlier years they were, for a time at least, under the sway of an individuality in its essence widely different from their own. The champions of the genius of Millais need be under no anxiety to claim for him entire independence of spirit. In his later achievements this independence is announced without reserve. They make it clear that the finer poetic feeling, which is evident in some of his earlier paintings, and more especially in some of his earlier drawings, was not destined to be the dominating factor in his artistic life. But it is no less true, as it seems to me, that there was a time of



THE LEAVEN

From *The Parables of our Lord.*

By Sir J. E. Millais, Bart., P.R.A.

Engraved by the Brothers Dalziel.
(Reproduced from their *Fifty Years' Work.*)

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his youth when he willingly surrendered himself to this spirit, and if, as we come now to perceive, it was not enduringly implanted in his nature, there can be no reason for disputing the suggestion that it sprang at the time from comradeship with a man in whose work, whatever other changes it may have suffered, this quality remained always supreme.

"I believe," said Mr. Ruskin, speaking of Rossetti shortly after the date of his death, "that his name should be placed first on the list of men within my own knowledge who have raised and changed the spirit of modern Art—raised in absolute attainment, changed in direction of temperament."

And if we turn with these words in mind to the Tennyson illustrations, it will seem not possible to dispute Mr. Ruskin's verdict.

Beautiful as are the drawings of Millais and Mr. Hunt, the final impression left by that volume rests in a pre-eminent degree upon Rossetti's exquisite design of "Sir Galahad" and his beautiful illustrations of the "Palace of Art."

Within two years of the issue of Tennyson's volume, the illustrated periodical called *Once a Week* was established, and its pages for many years afterwards bore admirable witness to the wide influence which these three great leaders were already exercising upon their generation. Indeed, it may be said that it is impossible to understand the real trend of this new movement, and to appreciate at their just worth the many and varying individualities engaged in its support, without a constant reference to these earlier volumes of a now defunct periodical. There we find in rich profusion

the earlier, and in many cases the more interesting, experiments of men like Du Maurier, Charles Keene, Frederick Sandys, Frederick Walker, and John Tenniel, side by side with numerous illustrations by Millais himself. Even Mr. Whistler was an occasional contributor, though his work, except in its very earliest essays where he frankly accepts the ruling convention of the time, quickly takes a place apart as a thing of purely individual temperament.

Afterwards, in the days of the Arts Club, I learned to know personally many of those men whose work I had loved when a boy as it appeared in the pages of *Once a Week*. Charles Keene, who had first been made known to me by his illustrations of Meredith's novel of *Evan Harrington*, was a constant figure there during the time when he was already a valued member of the staff of *Punch*. He was a quaint and amiable character, with a head that suggested Don Quixote, and I recall him now as he used to sit for many an hour of the afternoon and evening with his cup of coffee kept hot upon the bars of the old fire-place in the front room of the Club, filling and refilling one of those tiny clay pipes dating from the period of Charles II., which had been unearthed during some building excavations in the City. Taciturn by habit, and perhaps by preference, he yet always willingly entered into conversation when the occasion arose. Sometimes I would go down and see him in his little house in Chelsea, and turn over his elaborately careful etchings of boats, made by the sea.

It cannot be said, I think, that he was ever deeply stirred in his own work by the movement to



To seek the wanderer, forth himself doth come
And take him in his arms, and bear him home.
So in this life, this grove of Ignorance,
As to my homeward I myself advance,
Sometime aright, and sometimes wrong I go,
Sometime my pace is speedy, sometimes slow.
Life's Journey. GEORGE WITHER.

From *English Sacred Poetry.*

By FREDERICK SANDYS.

Engraved by the Brothers Dalziel.
(Reproduced from their *Fifty Years' Work.*)

By permission of
Messrs. George Routledge and Sons, Ltd.

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which I have specially referred, though he was full of generous appreciation of what was being done in that direction. The effects for which he was specially seeking in black and white demanded a style of execution peculiarly his own, and, when his mastery in the use of the material was complete, the result, more especially in the rendering of light and shade, was a thing distinct and incomparable.

The one man of all the group who showed, perhaps, the surest hold of the essential qualities of design was Fred Sandys. Though not of the body, he was closely associated with the pre-Raphaelite movement, and already in *Once a Week*, in such drawings as his illustration to Meredith's poem of "The Old Chartist," he had exhibited a complete command of technical resources. Sandys remained to the last a remarkable talker, keenly critical, and on occasion warmly appreciative. There was a period during his later life when he might be found almost any afternoon in the lower room of the Café Royal, and there, over a cigar and a cup of coffee, he would gossip freely of those earlier days during his association with Rossetti, always taking care, as it seemed to me, to let it be understood that when his own association with any one of the men of that time had ceased, they had ceased to be afterwards very interesting or notable.

I remember Whistler used to give some very humorous imitations of incidents that occurred in Sandys' studio, and he was particularly happy in the reproduction of a scene between the painter and his father—real or fanciful I cannot pretend to say—in which something of the haughty reticence and

reserve exhibited on both sides was very entertainingly reproduced.

Du Maurier was one of the constant attendants at the Arts Club during the afternoon, and was always a delightful companion. He loved discussion, loved especially to appraise and value the different ideals of contemporary painting in eager, and sometimes excited, dispute in regard to the merits of men whose work made, perhaps, a stronger appeal to me than to him. But our talk, even when it was most animated, never grew embittered. With Du Maurier, indeed, that would hardly have been possible, for the innate charm of his nature, linked with a constant desire to be just and fair, even to those towards whom his judgment was sometimes unfavourable, sufficed in itself to keep even the most heated controversy agreeable and urbane.

Despite his partly French origin, or perhaps by reason of it, he possessed an enthusiastic appreciation for the purely English type of beauty, whether in men or women. The athletic sanity of our English life appealed to him strongly, and it was, perhaps, the consciousness of something in himself of the Gallic spirit, something that leaned towards greater refinement and delicacy, that kept him obstinately devoted to the more solid ideals of the land in which he dwelt. It was this, I am sure, that so strongly attracted him to Millais, whose robust character, both as expressed in the man and exhibited in his art, he passionately admired. And I think it was the suspicion of a danger lest he might be tempted to surrender himself to something not so healthy in

its outlook that left him with a constant sense of reserve in his appreciation of men like Rossetti and Burne-Jones. And yet he was far too gifted an artist not to be sensible to the genius of both.

But it was as a man, and apart from any profession of faith, that he was so wholly delightful. His professed principles, though always sincerely held and admirably expressed, and his constant respect for the steady decorum of English character, gave scarcely a hint of the special charm of his own temperament. In moments of gaiety his high spirits were infectious, and he became on certain occasions, when the mood stirred him, the veriest and most delightful of Bohemians.

I recall him, at one of the annual feasts at Maidenhead held by a little club called "The Lambs," keeping the whole table in roars of laughter by an impromptu speech wherein he gave free rein to his humour and fancy—a speech which, I think, made us all feel that his constantly expressed reverence for the English ideal must have occasionally suffered some sense of fatigue that needed for its cure a sudden reversion to the land of his blood. We none of us suspected in those days—he himself perhaps least of all—that he was destined to win such world-wide fame as an author, and it was perhaps not until he became an author that it was possible to realise in what affectionate remembrance he held the days of his studentship in Paris.

Du Maurier's early contributions to *Once a Week* scarcely gave more than a hint of that humorous quality which he afterwards developed in the pages of *Punch*. It was there that he translated with

caricature the extravagances and eccentricities of that æsthetic cult which had indeed little counterpart in real life, excepting in so far as they were summed up in the conscious affectations of poor Oscar Wilde.

But at the time they were accepted by the public as in some sense a satire upon the newer school of painting, and—although that, I know, was no part of Du Maurier's intention—these drawings served in no small degree to encourage the spirit of ridicule with which some of the more serious work of the time was received.

Humour, as we may here perceive, was always at Du Maurier's command, and yet it is not specially by this quality that his best contributions to *Punch* are distinguished. They hold a place apart, as compared, for instance, with the caricatures of John Leech or Charles Keene, by reason of a certain grace and beauty which was their constant attribute. They formed a just and sometimes a flattering picture of the English social life of the time, betraying, in the rendering of form and in charm of bearing, the artist's devotion to that type of English beauty—fitting models for which Du Maurier could always find without wandering beyond the limits of his own home.

One or two of his most highly finished drawings I was enabled to publish in the *English Illustrated Magazine*, and there is one in particular called "A Nocturne" which shows with what a fine sense of reality he could render on occasion the most delicate effects in landscape.

Du Maurier loved music, and by common consent

was an accomplished musician, though his voice boasted no great range or power. But when he chose to sing to his intimate friends—and he never cared to seek a wider audience—it was impossible to resist the taste and charm which belonged to him as surely in music as in the traffic of social life. Even here, however, as in pictorial art, he could never quite determine with himself to what school he owned the strongest allegiance, and I have often heard him declare that he was torn in divided admiration between the perfect vocalisation of a singer like De Soria and the more passionate appeal of some of the later German music as it was interpreted by Henschell.

Richard Doyle—or Dicky Doyle, as he was better known to his countless friends—seemed rather by the quality of his work, which claims a certain kinship with the style of Sir John Gilbert, to belong to an earlier generation, and yet he was well known and well loved by even the youngest of those who were working under a newer impulse.

He was a welcome guest in nearly all of the great country-houses in England, and yet he preserved to the end a strange boyishness and shyness of manner, beneath which, however, there lurked a constant sense of kindly humour.

I met him first as a fellow-guest of Sir Coutts Lindsay at Balcarres, and I remember his telling me that he had such a horror of his modest wardrobe being overhauled by the footman who valeted him that it was his habit, on retiring for the night, to lock his clothes securely in a drawer, and then to watch with half-opened eyes in the morning, and with a

chuckle which he could not always conceal beneath the bed-clothes, the wild despair of the footman in his fruitless search for the secreted garments.

When the Grosvenor was established, Doyle became a constant contributor to the exhibitions, sending every year some delightful specimens of his fanciful treatment of fairy subjects.

But it is perhaps mainly by his earlier drawings on the wood that he will be best remembered, drawings which display the fecundity of his inven- ions exhibited in countless forms and faces, which he could multiply apparently without effort or trouble. One of the best of these drawings is that representing the Custom-House at Cologne, where he shows in a supreme degree his extraordinary power of granting individual character to every diminutive face that is introduced into the design.

A younger artist, who had perhaps something of the personal charm of Du Maurier, was Randolph Caldecott, whom I got to know soon after the publication of his hunting scenes.

He had been ordered to the South for the sake of his health, and at the suggestion of his friend and mine, Mr. Thomas Armstrong, who so greatly aided him in those earlier days in securing public recognition, he undertook to make the illustrations for a book written by my wife called *North Italian Folk.*

In manner Caldecott was as gentle as Du Maurier, and even more reserved, yet this reserve could yield on occasion to the wildest high spirits, when the humour that is never absent from his drawings found delightful utterance. Poor Caldecott always had about him the shadow of failing health,

and yet it never, I think, disturbed the deep tenderness of his nature that was revealed even in his most buoyant moods.

Perhaps the quaintest figure among the draughtsmen of that day was the Italian caricaturist Carlo Pellegrini, whose cartoons in *Vanity Fair* brought him prominently before the public.

Although he was a dweller among us for many years, he never acquired the slightest command of our tongue. Indeed, I rather think that as time went on his English grew persistently worse, but in his brave endeavour to express himself he forged a dialect of his own that was sometimes richly entertaining.

One day at a private view at the Dudley Gallery he went down on his knees to examine and to admire a drawing by Arthur Severn, and then, with sudden enthusiasm, he cried out so that all might hear, "Capital, capital! But why, the blast, he stipple?"

At Pagani's Italian Restaurant in Great Portland Street he was a constant attendant, and during the later years of his life, when he had fallen upon evil times, I think his kindly compatriots greatly befriended him.

There I constantly met him at lunch at the time when I was at work for the German Reeds, whose room of entertainment in St. George's Hall stood close by; and afterwards Pellegrini became a regular visitor at our house in Blandford Square, where he would always, at his own request, insist upon bringing some Italian dish to add to the modest feast that had been prepared for him.

Once on Christmas Day, when he was dining with

us, I specially warned him that my father-in-law, who was a clergyman, would be of the party, and beseeched him to curb the ordinary exuberance of his phraseology. But despite his solemn promise of circumspection, the ladies had no sooner quitted the dining-room than I found Pellegrini in animated conversation with my father-in-law, conversation liberally enforced on his side by a volley of strange oaths in that dialect that was all his own, oaths which, had they been partially understood by his companion, would, I think, have brought the evening to a sudden termination.

When his indiscretion had been pointed out to him poor Pellegrini was duly repentant, but we had not been in the drawing-room many minutes before he joined in a game of Little Horses which my children were playing upon the floor. At the close of the game he rose with an expression upon his face of deep remorse.

"Joe," he cried, "you 'ave ruin me! At the Las' Day the Lord God will say to me, 'Pellegrini, you 'ave every vice.' And I could 'ave reply, 'Lord God, pardon me, I 'ave never gamble.' Now I cannot say."

This renewed outburst made it plain to me that I had, on that particular occasion, made a somewhat unwise selection in the guests invited to meet him, and during the remainder of the evening I kept close by his elbow in fear and trembling of some new outrage that might bring our innocent festivities to a sudden close.

Pellegrini was a well-known figure at the Beefsteak Club, where his quaint idiosyncrasies were

welcomed by nearly all, but even there he would occasionally bring a shock of surprise and amazement to some newly elected member who was not yet accustomed to his liberal vocabulary.

There was one fellow-member of the club, himself an artist, who was wont to entertain the table with little impromptu sketches and designs which he executed with a certain degree of facility. This innocent display of artistic power gravely offended Pellegrini, who, possibly moved by a measure of jealousy that any one else should encroach upon his special province, insisted with some vehemence that a club was not the place for such exercises.

"I like the boy," he said to me one evening, "and when he talk, I listen, but 'tis pity he draw."

It was only a few evenings later that I entered the room and found the young friend who had been the subject of Pellegrini's rebuke absorbing the entire conversation of a crowded table. Pellegrini was present, and I could see that he was growing restive under the artist's unceasing flow of conversation. In a momentary pause he turned to me and in an audible whisper delivered this laconic judgment:

"Joe, I 'ave made big mistake. 'Tis better he draw."

Poor Pellegrini's misfortunes dated from the time when, abandoning the practice of caricature, he sought to establish himself as a painter in oils. Soon after he had started upon this perilous enterprise he said to me one day at the Arts Club, "Joe, I will make that you have not told the lie."

"What lie?" I inquired.

"You have say," he replied, "that I shall be the finest portrait-painter of the day. You will see—I *will* be."

As a matter of fact I had never ventured upon any such daring prophecy, neither did I have any faith in the chances of his success. Nor, I am sure, did he ever believe I had said it. It was rather, I suspect, a wily device of the Neapolitan to pledge my support for the new departure which he had taken in his art.

Towards the close of his life he rarely came to any Club, and I think he felt deeply the failure that had overtaken him.

Very quaintly, as we drove home one night, he gave expression to the consciousness that lay upon him that he had not long to live.

"When I die," he said, "which 'appen short——" and then he turned away with the sentence unfinished.

Of his talent as a caricaturist there can never be any question. He had the rare power of finding an equation for every face, summarising in a few lines its salient points of oddity. And this same power he exhibited in his shrewd judgment of character. At a dinner-table little that was characteristic escaped his humorous regard. Though alien born, and almost jealously retaining to the end of his life amongst us his individuality as a foreigner, he possessed a quick and just appreciation of our national characteristics, more especially as they lent themselves to humorous portrayal.

He once said to me, "A man may caricature the people of a race that is not his own, but it needs a native to judge them seriously."

He forgot his own maxim, poor fellow, when he launched out as a painter of portraits, for the source of his failure lay not merely in insufficient power, but in the lack of true comprehension of the deeper qualities of character.

CHAPTER X

THE GROSVENOR GALLERY AND THE NEW GALLERY

WHEN, for reasons that need not now be discussed, Mr. Hallé and I severed our connection with the Grosvenor Gallery, we at once cast about to establish its successor. It was obvious to us both that if the experiment was to be made successfully it must be made without delay, and, as a matter of fact, the New Gallery as it stands to-day was constructed and completed within the brief period of three months.

One of our initial difficulties was to secure a suitable site, and the second obstacle, scarcely less formidable, was to procure from those who favoured the movement sufficient resources to justify us in proceeding with the work.

The site upon which the New Gallery now stands had at one time been occupied by the well-known livery stables of Messrs. Newman, but shortly before coming into our possession they had been partly transformed to serve the purpose of a provision market. This partial reconstruction aided us very materially in our work. The central hall, so far as the mere outline of the fabric is concerned, did not need entire reconstruction. But the task,

even with this help, remained formidable enough, and could not have been possibly carried through within the limited time at our disposal if it had not been for the hearty and zealous co-operation of all of those who were engaged upon the building.

There were many moments during these anxious three months when it seemed indeed impossible of accomplishment. Inevitable delays in the supply of the material required, again and again imperilled the chances of success, and I think we were not a little astonished ourselves to find that our original plan could be carried out in its entirety, and that we were able to open the first exhibition in the month of May.

The establishment of the Grosvenor and the New Gallery form an interesting chapter in the history of modern art in England. It is more than probable that neither the one nor the other could have come into existence if the Royal Academy had taken a more generous and liberal view of the functions it had to discharge; but the merest glance at the history of this institution suffices to show that it has at all times adopted the narrowest interpretation of its duties and responsibilities. Anxious for the homage due to a national institution, and intolerant of any protest against its rule, it has nevertheless persistently failed to advance with the growth of new ideas of art, and has steadily declined to undertake any enlargement of the original scope of its labours. Of the more important art movements that have arisen since the date of its creation, the Royal Academy has been little more than a spectator. At a time when the national

interest in matters of art was scarcely recognised, it might, by a liberal interpretation of its duties, have become the acknowledged centre of a coherent system of art administration, but it had chosen instead to allow nearly all that was done by way of progress to be accomplished by independent effort.

It might easily have been shown that it was not the intention of the founders of the Royal Academy that it should thus degenerate into a private undertaking. The encouragement which George III. gave to the scheme was given on the ground that "he considered the culture of the arts as a national concern," and in the instrument presented for his signature it is said that the great utility of such an institution has been fully and clearly demonstrated. Moreover, in the catalogue of the first national exhibition the demand of payment at the doors was made a subject of apology, and the only excuse was that no other means could be discovered of preventing the entry of improper persons.

But although the public and national character of the undertaking was clearly acknowledged at that time, a very few years sufficed to prove that the constitution of the Academy was unfavourable to the right interpretation of its duties. When the Academy was founded the English did not possess a National Gallery, and Barry, who perceived the use of such a collection of the Masters of Art in forming and educating the taste both of art students and the public, proposed to his fellow-members of the Academy that they should devote a portion of their surplus funds on the purchase of pictures by the Old

Masters. But the Academy rejected this proposal as promptly as they had discarded the idea of a closer connection with the nation.

That the imperfections of the institution were clearly perceived by distinguished artists who afterwards became members of the body, is not disputed. Before the Commission of 1863 Mr. G. F. Watts expressed himself in no uncertain terms.

"It seems to me," he said, "that there must be some defect. If it were extremely anxious to develop taste or encourage art I think that some means would have been found. A merchant finds means if he wants to improve his commercial arrangements. Whatever a man wishes to do, he finds a way of doing it more or less satisfactorily. But I do not see that the Royal Academy has done anything whatever." And again, in relation to public taste and its guidance in all that concerns the erection of public monuments or public buildings, Mr. Watts says, "It seems to be a monstrous thing that the Royal Academy has had no voice in this matter." And further, referring to independent efforts for the encouragement of public schemes of mural decoration, he most emphatically declares, "I think it ought to have occurred to the Academy, as a body of men having the direction of art and taste, many years before it occurred to the Prince Consort; and I think also that, when the initiative was taken, the Academy ought to have adopted the movement and have given it every advantage possible."

And this was already matter of history at the time that the Grosvenor Gallery was founded. But the

same spirit that had dwarfed their conception of the duties of a national institution on the administrative side, had also coloured the ungenerous attitude that they had at first betrayed towards that great movement in modern painting which was heralded by the pre-Raphaelite brethren.

In the teeth of a keen opposition that was at first displayed towards his work, Millais had fought his way into the august ranks of the academic body; but with that exception nearly all the great leaders of the new movement still stood without its walls. Holman Hunt, Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Ford Madox Brown, and the great sculptor Alfred Stevens knew nothing at that time of academic honour, and their work, if it was submitted for official judgment, was either coldly received or was treated in a spirit of active hostility.

It was that which gave to the movement which resulted in the establishment of the Grosvenor its importance and significance.

The battle has long ended now, and the fact that these men did, or did not, receive academic recognition counts for nothing in respect of the place they hold in modern English painting. Such rebel forces as have since come into existence have not been of a kind to win a like distinction, and public interest in art has become so languid in its exercise that if such a body of men were now to arise it may be questioned whether their work would stir the feeble pulses of the time.

But at the period of which I am speaking their gradual advancement was watched and welcomed by enthusiastic admirers, and it was that which made it

possible for institutions like the Grosvenor and the New Gallery to challenge the sleepy self-complacency of the dwellers in Burlington House.

And it will now scarcely be denied that each of these two institutions in its turn has served a useful purpose. In a sense, indeed, they have been almost too successful, for a distinguished success achieved in one or the other has again and again proved the means of obtaining for the artist tardy recognition from the authorities of Burlington House. But the forces ranged on the side of orthodoxy are in this country always formidable, and it may be questioned now whether enough vitality survives in English art to justify the continued existence of independent institutions such as those I have named.

The great prices obtained at public auctions for the earlier masters of our School are sometimes quoted in support of the view that the taste for art remains unimpaired. As a matter of fact I think they may be taken to warrant an exactly opposite conclusion. The buyers of thirty or forty years ago who helped to encourage the painters of their own day were guided for the most part by their own individual preference. Their taste may often have been uninstructed, but at least it was their own. They loved the pictures which they sought to acquire, and, as their collections grew, a better taste grew with them. The modern buyer, on the other hand, is for the most part the mere puppet of the dealer. He buys at the top price of the market because he believes the market will maintain its price, and with a prudence that the dealer is careful to foster he makes his choice from among those

older pictures whereof the market value has been appraised by time.

And so long as these purely commercial considerations dominate the taste of the time, the cause of contemporary painting must surely suffer. That a truer feeling will come again with the passing of time need not be doubted, but any one who has followed the movement in English painting since the middle of the last century must perforce experience a feeling of melancholy at the listless apathy and indifference which has taken the place of the earnest enthusiasm of an earlier day.

That enthusiasm was still at its height when Sir Coutts Lindsay founded the Grosvenor Gallery; it survived with scarcely diminished force when Mr. Hallé and I succeeded in establishing the New Gallery, and I look back without regret to my long association with both these institutions. As the child of our own creation the New Gallery has claimed from both of us the larger and the longer service. At the inception of our task we had the loyal support of Burne-Jones, whose art we both deeply loved, and when he died I think we both felt that a part of our mission had gone.

CHAPTER XI

WHISTLER AND CECIL LAWSON

APART from Burne-Jones, whose gathered works, the fruit of many years' labour, naturally occupied the dominant place in the first exhibitions of the Grosvenor Gallery, there were two painters, Whistler and Cecil Lawson, whose pictures made it in their different ways notable and interesting.

At that time Whistler's claims as an artist were not seriously entertained beyond the limits of a very narrow circle. I had known him personally for some little time, and had included his work in that series of articles written in 1873 to which reference has already been made. Writing of him then, I had said, "Opinions as to his merits differ widely enough, but there is nothing vague or uncertain about them. He is either blamed or praised heartily, and for the most part he is heartily blamed.

"Persons who do not admire his pictures are rather disposed to regard them in the light of a personal insult, and to behave as though the painter had deliberately intended to cause annoyance. The consequence is that Mr. Whistler receives more abuse than any other painter, and abuse of a kind that implies something also of pity; for when he is

not regarded in the light of a wilful wrong-doer, his work is accepted as the expression of a defective intelligence."

These sentences, I think fairly enough, represent Mr. Whistler's position at that time, nor had the public estimate of his powers greatly changed when the Grosvenor Gallery was established in 1877.

It is not necessary now to fight over again that battle that was waged by some of us on his behalf. To me it was never difficult to appreciate at their true value the distinguished qualities of his art; and at this time of day his claims are so widely and so loudly announced, that it is sometimes difficult for those who admired him first to keep pace with his later worshippers.

About the year 1876 I had written a notice of the exhibition of his work held in Pall Mall which had greatly pleased him, and when he was decorating the late Mr. Leyland's house in Prince's Gate I used often to go down while he was at work, and during the luncheon hour—which was an improvised meal daintily set out under Whistler's order in the empty house—our talk used to roam widely over things of Art and Life, for Whistler was as acute in his perception of the foibles of character as he was fastidious and exacting in the execution of even the lightest of his designs.

Whistler's public attitude was one of uncompromising hostility to all critics. For him Art was always a thing exclusively for the expert, and he regarded the intrusion of any comment, unless it proceeded from a brother craftsman, as not only futile but mischievous. This was a very natural

attitude in view of the special gifts he possessed, for he was above all things a man of the "métier," conceiving Art as a thing isolated and detached from thoughts that found expression in other mediums, a thing only to be judged by its own exclusive laws which he deemed could not be fully interpreted save by the artist himself.

But he had even in this respect his little human weaknesses, and the praise which I had bestowed upon his work on more than one occasion brought from him a warm letter of appreciation, the existence of which I think he afterwards forgot; for I remember at a dinner-party, during the later days of our friendship, when he was denouncing, with his accustomed liberty of speech, that hated tribe of which I had been a member, I ventured softly from the other end of the table to interject the remark, "Ah yes, Jimmy, but you didn't always think so," and then upon the top of a reiterated expression of his contempt for those who wrote about Art, I reminded him of my possession of a little letter which I had been very happy to receive and was well content to preserve.

And so the incident closed with some graceful and half-jesting reference on his part to my superior claims, which he had always, of course, as he declared, impliedly excepted from his general condemnation of the class.

As a companion I found him delightful, and his hospitality at the several houses he successively occupied in Chelsea, however restricted it might occasionally prove owing to his shifting financial fortunes, had an inimitable grace and distinction

peculiarly his own; though there were some, however, whose more exacting appetite was not always content with the slender material of those delightful little breakfasts over which he so perfectly presided.

To me the charm of the host sufficed to cover any deficiency in the feast, even in those days when he laughingly told me that his fishmonger was the only tradesman who could afford to deal with him. But I remember meeting, during one of these periods of narrow resources, a foreign painter who at one time had felt himself greatly favoured by an invitation to Cheyne Walk. I asked him if he had seen anything of Whistler lately, to which he replied, "Ah no, not now so much. He ask me a leetle while ago to breakfarst, and I go. My cab-fare two shilling, 'arf-crown. I arrive, very nice. Gold fish in bowl, very pretty. But breakfarst—one egg, one toast, no more! Ah no! My cab-fare, two shilling, 'arf-crown. For me no more!"

This, I think, was an exaggerated picture of the limits which Whistler was sometimes compelled to set to his hospitality. I know, for my own part at any rate, that these breakfasts were always delightful, and sometimes, when the mood took him, he would go himself into the kitchen and prepare a "plat" of his own devising, thus giving a final charm to his graceful entertainments.

His talk on these occasions, swift in its wit and always ready in repartee, was not, however, often of a kind that bears recording, so much depended upon the man himself, his personality and his manner, and so much upon the exact appropriateness of every word he uttered to the mood of the occasion.

There was always about him a substratum of impish mischief which gave flavour and colour either to his criticism or his appreciation.

Once I remember, when a friend at the table was gravely reproaching him upon his lack of admiration of certain examples of Dresden china, Whistler still remained entirely impenitent and unconvinced until his friend was tempted to round off his rebuke by the somewhat audacious protest, "But, my dear Jimmy, you are not catholic in your taste," to which Jimmy supplied the lightning retort, "No, that's true. I only care for what's good."

Sometimes his remarks were almost startling in their reckless daring, and were apt to produce in the company in which he found himself a feeling of consternation. Once at an assembly at Lady Lindsay's, on the entry of a painter whose face seemed to bear on that night even more than its wonted gravity of expression, Jimmy went up to the new-comer and in his shrillest tones remarked to him, "My dear,—your face is your fortune," ending this outrageous compliment with one of those wild laughs that sounded like the war-whoop of an Indian who has just scalped his foe.

Of literature, in the wider sense of the term, I never discovered that Whistler had any profound knowledge, though when he wanted a quotation to heighten the sarcasm of any biting sentence it was happily chosen, and most often, strangely enough, such quotation would be taken from Dickens, whose humour strongly appealed to him.

But he was an artist first and last; and when not preoccupied with the things of his art, he so far

resembled Millais that he loved to feel the pulse of the life of his time as it was exhibited in general society.

Towards men, especially those for whom he had no great liking, he was scathing and unsparing in the exercise of a wit that took small account of any conventional limitation, but towards women he was unfailingly courteous, with something of almost chivalrous deference of bearing and manner. Of all the painters of his time the man whom he most respected was, I think, Albert Moore; and the affinity was natural enough, for Moore, like Whistler, deliberately excluded from his art all reference to emotion and passion, and sought, within rigorous limitations, for a grace that owed nothing to any art but his own.

In Moore this was due to an accepted principle that was patiently obeyed; in Whistler it was intuitive instinct. In his case there was no need of any process of exclusion. Life, as it came into the region of his art, only appealed to him in virtue of those qualities he sought to present, and it was by no deliberate choice but by natural inclination that he left the entire story of human emotion and human passion untouched and untold.

A common prejudice of that time, long dissipated now, but which found utterance then in the intemperate condemnation by Mr. Ruskin that afterwards formed the subject of the celebrated libel action, was to the effect that the results of Whistler's painting, often so fragile and so slight in their final appearance upon the canvas, were due to a wilful neglect of the resources at his command. It was

widely held among the public who loved him not, and even among brother artists who should have known better, that his painting revealed the lack of pains and labour. Nothing really could have been more unjust or more untrue. I have often sat in his studio while he was at work, and found ample reason to be convinced that not a touch was ever set upon the canvas that was not finely considered and fastidiously chosen.

I think in himself he was hardly aware of the degree to which his painting lent itself to an opposite impression. He was so keenly concentrated upon the kind of truth he sought to render that he was half unconscious that the form in which he chose to present it was strange and repugnant to the taste of the time; but although genuinely modest in the presence of his task, he was often almost arrogant in his assertion of the excellence of the result when the task was ended. The picture once completed and set in its frame, Whistler became from that moment an ardent champion of his own genius.

Combat was the delight of his life, and there was no violence of assertion he did not love to employ if he thought that by no other means could he encourage an opponent into the dangerous arena of controversy.

As a matter of fact, I do not think he was ever quite happy unless one of these pretty little quarrels was on hand, and whenever he suspected that any particular dispute in which he was engaged showed signs of waning, he would, I think out of pure devilment, cast about to lay the foundations of a new quarrel.

Something of the kind occurred in my own case. At his own earnest suggestion, while I was the English editor of *L'Art*, I invited him, with the concurrence of the proprietors in Paris, to furnish an etching for publication. Knowing well the amiable idiosyncrasies of my dear friend, I was very insistent that he should set down precisely and in writing all the terms and conditions which he thought it right to impose, and yet, when this had been done and the etching had been given to the world, with almost impish ingenuity he thought he had detected some breach in our contract, and wrote me thereupon a little letter of reproach which I saw plainly, when I received it, was destined for ultimate publication as the preface to a controversy into which he thought he could lure me.

But for once he made an unfortunate choice of a foe. "Not with me, my dear Jimmy," I replied to him. "No one enjoys more keenly your essays as a controversialist, or more deeply appreciates the wit and ingenuity which they display, but not with me." I think that he must have perceived that I had detected his amiable design, for when he came to see me after the receipt of my letter it was in a spirit of the most boisterous good-humour that he reproached me with having despoiled him of a promised affray.

The fact that he was in many quarters unpopular he realised with a sense of conscious enjoyment. On one occasion I had been put up as a candidate for a club of which he was already a member, and on meeting him at an evening party he said, "My dear Joe, why didn't you tell me? I would have put my name down on your page," to which I replied in

something of his own spirit—knowing that I had already been elected, a fact of which he was unaware —"Well, my dear Jimmy, put it down now, it can do no harm now"—a delicate tribute to that unpopularity to which I have referred, which he received with riotous laughter.

One of the latest of the contests in which Whistler loved to involve himself found him pitted against an opponent who was almost his match in ingenuity, and far outstripped him in the unscrupulous use of any weapon that came ready to his hand.

This was Charles Howell, a strange creature whom I had first met at one of Rossetti's delightful little dinners, and who was at the time welcomed as a companion by all the artists of that special group. Endowed with real taste in all matters of Art, he for a while served as secretary to Mr. Ruskin, and in that capacity was able to ingratiate himself with many of the artists of whose work Ruskin was then the champion.

I met him often at Whistler's house in Cheyne Walk, where I think he was as much appreciated for the more questionable qualities of his character as for his quick admiration of Whistler's genius.

The attitude of one to the other was always amusing to watch, for it was obvious that both were on their guard: Howell half conscious that even in his most plausible mood he lay open to the suspicion of a sinister intention, and Whistler, whilst not unaware of the subtlety and skill of his companion, rather encouraging the initiation of a contest in which he never doubted the sufficiency of his own resources.

There are numerous stories of Howell well known

to the men with whom he was at that time brought in contact that need not now be revived. What is certainly true, as against any defects that may be alleged against him, is that in conversation he was interesting and attractive, watchful of the effect on his companion of every word that he uttered, and yet so quick in apparent sympathy that it was impossible to ignore the charm of his personality.

What was the end of the particular controversy to which I have referred I do not now rightly remember, but I seem to recall that when Whistler last spoke to me upon the subject he was in some apprehension lest his wily friend should have stolen a march upon him.

During the last years of his life Whistler passed but little time in England, and I think the resentment, not unnaturally aroused at the treatment his work had received at an earlier time, had quickened into something approaching absolute dislike towards this country. The last time I saw him was at a small dinner-party at my sister-in-law's house in Paris, where his reputation as a painter was firmly and finally established. Whatever his altered feelings towards England, it had made no change in his relations with his old friends, and on that evening it seemed to me he had in him all the old spirit of gaiety and wit as I had first known it in the earlier days of Cheyne Walk.

In temperament and character, as well as in the chosen ideal of his art, he holds a distinctive place in his generation. In spite of his undisguised desire to make enemies, the singular charm of his nature brought him many friends, and I think there is not

one who knew him well who does not cherish his memory with something approaching to affection.

Cecil Lawson, whose work was also prominently brought to the notice of the public through the earlier exhibitions at the Grosvenor, was a man of a wholly different stamp. For several years before the hour of his triumph he had not been very well treated by the Hanging Committee of the Academy. It was about this time that, by his request, I had been to visit him at his little studio in Chelsea to see one of his pictures, which he particularly thought had been unjustly treated; and his delight was frankly avowed when a little later I took Sir Coutts Lindsay, who invited him to become an exhibitor at the Grosvenor.

The private view of that year and the next left Cecil Lawson in a state of unconcealed exaltation of spirit. The "Pastoral" and the "Minister's Garden" set him, at a bound, in the front rank of the painters of his time, and I shall not easily forget the sense of almost intoxication with which he wandered from room to room receiving on every side the meed of well-earned praise which only a year or two before seemed to lie for ever beyond his reach.

The occasion was celebrated by a little dinner given by Lawson in the old garden of his studio in Glebe Place. Whistler was of the party, and it is pleasant to remember with what genuine cordiality he rejoiced in Lawson's success.

I saw him very often after that time, for he was, I think, disposed to exaggerate the small share I had taken in making his work better known; and

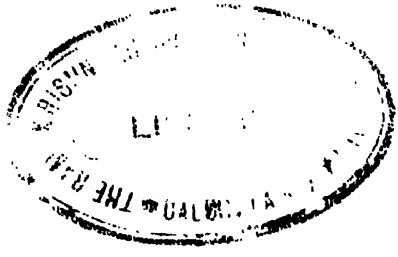
he was always anxious for my criticism or approval on new work he had in hand. But I never left his studio without some feeling of melancholy apprehension, for it seemed to me always that his overwrought and highly-strung nervous temperament gave no fair promise of long life.

On one of the last of our meetings he had specially invited my visit, as he particularly wanted my judgment upon a picture just completed. It happened when I reached his studio that it did not so strongly appeal to me as other examples of his work, and yet I did not then quite understand the sudden look of pain that passed over his face when my opinion was expressed. It was only afterwards that I received from him a touching little letter telling me that he saw plainly I did not greatly care for the picture, and that he was disappointed, because he had intended to offer it to me as an acknowledgment of my friendship.

"I hope later," he said, "to do something that will really please you." But the time left to him was shorter than either of us could have guessed, and within only a little while his career was ended. He was a very lovable man, full of high ambition, and inspired in the happier moments of his life with a just confidence in his great powers. But these more buoyant moods alternated with seasons of great depression, and in this respect his temperament showed a marked resemblance to that of Fred Walker.

His spirit fed upon itself, and his hunger for success, linked with a still nobler desire to realise the many dreams of beauty that thronged his brain,

left him with but little leisure for repose. I think the eager intensity of his nature was sometimes a terror to himself, and although the end came more swiftly than I had divined, it was scarcely wonderful that the constant excitability of his temperament should have prematurely worn down a physique that never was robust.



CHAPTER XII

ART JOURNALISM

My connection with the Grosvenor Gallery was due, in the first instance, to a series of articles upon the reform of the Royal Academy published by me in the columns of the *Pall Mall Gazette.* These papers had attracted the attention of Sir Charles Dilke, who based upon them a motion brought forward in the House of Commons, which, however, had no practical result.

They had also been seen by Sir Coutts Lindsay and Mr. Hallé, and these gentlemen invited me to associate myself with them in the future conduct of the Grosvenor. This new vocation, however, in no way interrupted my career as an Art Critic. Already established on the *Pall Mall Gazette,* I began at the same time to widen the range of my writings on the subject of art, and in this way, at the invitation of Mr. Samuel Carter Hall, became a regular contributor to the *Art Journal.* At the same time I was offered and accepted the post of Art Critic on the *Manchester Guardian,* and in the year 1875 I was appointed as the English editor of *L'Art,* a periodical so luxuriously produced that it could not be destined ever to win a very large public.

Mr. S. C. Hall was a quaint and curious figure of the time, whose acquaintance never ceased to afford me a certain humorous enjoyment. He was supposed to be the model upon which Dickens has based his superb creation of Mr. Pecksniff, and there were points in his character which readily lent themselves for exploitation at the hands of such a master of humour.

For a time our relations on the *Art Journal* were friendly and undisturbed, and Mr. Hall was good enough to express in unstinted terms his appreciation of my work. But it was impossible, even at that time, in personal converse with the man, not to be haunted by the suspicion that his constant assertion of the most ideal aims in life were consistent with an occasional reference to more mundane considerations.

Both he and Mrs. Hall must have sometimes laid themselves open to the charge of taking themselves too seriously, for I remember Edmund Yates telling me that he had once asked Charles Dickens whether he thought they were ever conscious of playing a part, to which Dickens had replied, "I think once a year they exchange a wink, possibly on Carter's birthday."

Purnell used to relate an anecdote of the gravity of their entertainments having once been broken up by an unintentional flash of humour on the part of Mrs. Hall herself. At one end of the dinner-table Mr. Hall, in his most solemn tones, was announcing to the company his unswerving faith in a future life, and in conclusion expressed the hope that in that other and happier world he should

rejoin his dear wife; upon which Mrs. Hall, from her place at the end of the board, interjected, in strong Irish accents, the somewhat disconcerting answer, "No, Carter; I shall go to Jesus."

Mr. Hall's appearance, with his wealth of white hair and dark eyebrows, seemed to give a certain stamp of authority to the unctuous platitudes in which he was wont to indulge. He used constantly to say to me, "My object, my dear sir, is to do as much good in the world as I can," and in such utterances as this there was never, I am sure, even the lurking suspicion on his part that he was exposing himself to the shafts of ridicule.

I remember one evening the subject of spiritualism was under discussion, and Mr. Hall was avowing his confident faith in the reality of messages from another world to which he confessed that he himself in his writing was particularly indebted.

"On these occasions," he said, "when I have written something which I have deemed to be particularly inspired, I have often turned round to the spirit whom I knew to be at my side, and have said with fervid gratitude, 'Thank you, my dear sir; thank you.'"

It was only upon longer acquaintance I discovered that the air of venerable piety, which never deserted him in social intercourse, was consistent with a very shrewd appreciation of commercial success. Little by little I found the sanctity of his manner sometimes giving way to very pointed suggestions that the mercantile interest of the Journal must not be wholly sacrificed to my independent views upon Art.

At first these suggestions were only tentatively put forward, and always with an elaborate deference to my better judgment as a critic, but day by day they became more encroaching, until at last the conviction was forced upon me that the columns under my charge were intended to serve as a useful support to the advertisement department of the Journal. After a while these constant interferences became so galling and exasperating to me that I determined to break our connection, and in a letter, which I strove to make polite but which I intended to be deeply sarcastic, I ventured to hint that as the criticism I was called upon to write was now required to take so entirely the colour of an advertisement, I thought it would be better that it should pass directly into the hands of the manager of the advertisement department.

I confess I thought my letter would provoke an explosion of indignant protest, but in this I was sadly disappointed; for all response I got only a honeyed little note of acknowledgment, which, as far as I can remember, ran in these terms:—"I hasten to acknowledge with many thanks your courteous letter. So much I feel compelled to say, more than this I will not say."

The old gentleman's unflinching urbanity had stood him in good stead, and even Whistler himself, had he been confronted with such a letter, could hardly have found the means to continue the controversy.

While I was still associated with the *Art Journal* I had become also a contributor to the *Portfolio*, then under the editorship of Mr. Philip Hamerton, who is best known to the world by his book upon

Etching, and his studies of that part of rural France in which he usually resided. And a little later I also wrote upon Art matters in the columns of the *Academy*.

These several engagements, combined with the work that I had to do for the *Manchester Guardian*, made the annual occasions of the opening of the Spring Exhibitions a specially busy time for me.

I remember one Sunday morning in May, when I had sat up very far into the night completing my opening article for the *Guardian*, my servant awakened me with the intelligence that a young gentleman was in the drawing-room waiting to see me. He did not give his name, as he told her that it would be unknown to me; but he had arrived only the previous evening, as he said, from New York, and was the bearer of several messages from friends there which he was anxious to deliver before his departure for the Continent later in the day.

On the night before he had sailed, he said—and this was his excuse for intruding upon me,—he had supped with some of the artists best known on the other side, and amongst them he specially introduced the names of Frank Millet and Edwin Abbey, who, as he said, had drawn from him the promise that he would on no account quit London without having shaken me by the hand.

He was so graceful in his apologies for this early intrusion that my first irritation was quickly allayed, and the warm reference to myself, of which he assured me he was the bearer, must, I suppose, have touched my vanity, for I at once invited him to be my guest at dinner that evening that we might talk

more at leisure and at length of the fortunes of our common friends on the other side.

This, alas, he explained, was impossible.

Was there nothing, then, I could do for him? Nothing! And then with renewed apologies he rose to go; but at the door he turned as though a sudden thought had come into his mind. Yes, he had just remembered! There was a trifling service I could render him, and then, before he mentioned its nature, he again ran over the names of "the boys," as he described them, with whom he had parted on the eve of sailing. Perfect artist as he had proved himself to be, he blundered at the last; for to the list, as he now recounted it, he added the name of Alfred Parsons, who had indeed been in America, but who had long ago returned, and whom it chanced I had seen at the Arts Club the day before.

All unconscious, however, that this mistake had aroused my suspicions, he proceeded to describe what he termed the ludicrous position in which he found himself. He was about to start on a tour round the world, but by some absurd mistake the remittances from his home in Western America had gone one way, while he had gone the other. And this petty contretemps he aptly illustrated in pantomime by indicating the course of his remittances with his right hand and his own journey with his left, crossing them on his breast as though to suggest the passing of ships in the night. And then finally, in the lightest and airiest of tones, came the announcement of a modest request that I should cash him a cheque for £50.

Affecting to ignore the financial aspect which

our brief acquaintance had suddenly assumed, I carelessly let fall the remark that I had seen Mr. Alfred Parsons yesterday at the Arts Club, to which I added the suggestion that he might deem it convenient under the circumstances to quit the house.

His bright candid eyes met mine for an instant, and then, as though by a flash of lightning, he was down the stairs and in the street.

I think it must have been this same young gentleman who only a year or two later visited Irving at the Lyceum Theatre during the rehearsal of one of his plays. In that case he represented himself as the nephew of Mr. Child, a friend of Irving's who had recently set up a monument at Stratford-on-Avon; but in substance the story was the same. There also he sought nothing but the pleasure of shaking Irving by the hand, and it was only at the moment of parting that he asked for a letter of introduction to the Mayor of Stratford, that he might not appear quite a stranger in the town whither he was bound in order to inspect his uncle's gift.

But in this case he was more successful, for that coveted £50, which my niggard spirit had denied him, he managed, upon the strength of Irving's letter, to extract from Stratford's Mayor. From him he received another letter of introduction to Mr. Chamberlain, but here, as I am glad to think, with no damaging financial result. It is only fair to add, as a finish to this brief and interesting episode of an enterprising adventurer, that Mr. Child, indignant of the use that had been made of his name, after-

wards insisted upon repaying the amount that had been nefariously borrowed.

My work for the *Manchester Guardian* sometimes took me far afield, and in the year 1882, when the city of Manchester was contemplating a reconstitution of its permanent Art Gallery, I went, at their request, on a tour of inspection of the museums and schools of France. These articles were afterwards gathered into a little volume, which was subsequently translated into French and published in Paris, under the title of *L'Art en Province.*

I started in the earlier days of July, and the trains between London and Paris were already thronged with tourists on their way to Switzerland, and I remember that my journey was brightened at this earlier stage by an incident, illustrating, in an amusing way, certain characteristics of the Scottish nature.

Two youthful representatives of the race were seated in a compartment of a corridor carriage adjoining my own, and in the compartment beyond them were three or four young ladies travelling alone.

We had not gone very far from Calais, perhaps some twenty miles or more, when the train was brought to a sudden stop, and looking out of the window I saw several officials of the railway running up and down the permanent way in evident surprise and alarm.

Suddenly their attention was concentrated upon the Scotsmen's compartment, where the indicator thrust out from the side of the carriage betokened that the alarm-bell had been sounded by them. A

swift altercation, the purport of which I scarcely gathered, ended in the peremptory demand on the part of the officials for the surrender of the travellers' tickets, combined with a menacing intimation that the matter would be further investigated on our arrival at Amiens.

At Amiens it seemed as though all the staff of the Nord were gathered upon the platform, and the force of this official affray was concentrated upon the compartment occupied by the two sturdy travellers from the North. With scant ceremony these gentlemen were commanded to descend from the carriage amid a fierce war of words, in which I fancy neither party had the smallest understanding of what was uttered by the other.

Alighting from my own compartment, I caught, rising above the angry objurgations of the French officials, the repeated assurances of the Scotsmen that they admitted their fault, and were eager to apologise for its consequences.

"I admit that I did it," said the elder of the two, with a broad Scotch accent, "and I am sorry."

But this reiterated expression of guilt and regret only seemed to incense the Frenchmen the more, until, in his despair, the Scotsman turned to me and in tones of almost pitiful entreaty inquired if I could speak a little French. On my replying in the affirmative, he supplied me with an explanation of his conduct, which he begged me to translate for the benefit of the *chef de gare*.

"Will you tell them," he replied, "that we admit we did it, and are sorry, but it occurred in this way? On entering the compartment my friend and I

observed that there were two small windows connected with the adjoining carriage, where, as we happened to know, a party of ladies were seated, and more for their sake than ours," he continued, "and with a view to securing the privacy which we knew they would desire, my friend and I thought that we would pull down the blinds over these windows, and so leave the ladies in the full assurance that they were unobserved. But when I pulled the ring in the small window nearest to me the blind did not come down, and then my friend tried, with the same result, and then I said, 'Maybe if we both pull together it will be better.' And so we both pulled together, and yet the blind did not come down, but the train stopped, and we are sorry."

These poor gentlemen had been totally unaware that the rings at which they had been tugging so vigorously were attached to no blinds, but directly communicated with the guard of the train. They were, in fact, the alarm-signals which had brought us to so sudden a halt outside Calais.

This was the story which he implored me to relate to the *chef de gare* and his assembled subordinates, and I shall not easily forget the mingled incredulity and amusement with which my narrative was received.

Thinking to heighten its effect in still further excuse for what had happened, I explained to the official that in Scotland, especially in the North, women preserved a seclusion which was almost Oriental, and I then detailed, word for word, the defence of their conduct as the Scotsman had confided it to me, and when I came to that part

of the narrative upon which he had particularly insisted, that it was more for the ladies' sake than their own that they had endeavoured to secure complete privacy between the two compartments, the Gallic merriment, breaking through all official reserve, knew no bounds.

"Mais, monsieur, ce n'est pas possible? Ce n'est pas vrai?"

"Monsieur, parole d'honneur, c'est bien vrai."

And at last, official indignation appeased by what appeared to them to be the irresistible humour of the situation, the *chef de gare* turned to the unfortunate malefactors and said, "Eh bien, messieurs, montez donc, montez donc," and turning to the guard of the train added, "Rendez les billets à ces messieurs," and so, amid a ripple of laughter that ran down the platform, the incident closed, and the train proceeded on its way. But within little less than an hour afterwards, when I, in my lonely compartment, had sunk into a comfortable sleep, I felt a touch upon my shoulder, and opening my eyes saw the Scotsman bending above me.

I feared some new trouble, and inquired if there was anything more I could do.

"Nothing," replied he; "but my friend and I feel we are deeply indebted to you."

Politely I assured him that the little service I had been able to render him might count for nothing.

"Ay," he answered, "but we're very conscious it counts for a good deal, for we have been thinking it over, and we very well perceive that it might have cost us as much as ten pounds," and so with renewed thanks he left me.

Reaching Paris, I gave my bag to a porter, and was hurrying along the platform when I heard the pattering of feet in swift pursuit. I turned, and there was my Scotsman again.

"See here," he cried, "I had meant to ask you, but forgot. Will you tell me, where did you learn your French?"

It had suddenly dawned upon him, after the painful crisis he had gone through, that there were junctures in life in which the use of a foreign tongue might be of practical service; and I have no doubt, with the indomitable persistence which forms part of the national character, he is even now in some Northern home struggling with the difficulties of the French language.

Yet, apart from the merest smattering obtained at school, my later acquaintance with the tongue came about in a curious way. In 1870 I made the acquaintance of a Monsieur Gauthiot, a dear friend of many years, who had just then, by reason of the bitter spirit aroused by the Franco-German War, been driven from Berlin, where he had occupied the post of Professor of French Literature. For a while he took refuge in London, whence he contributed occasional articles to the *Débâts*. And here it was, when we came to know one another, that we agreed to dine together twice a week, so that on one evening we should talk English, and on the other that he should instruct me in French.

Our meetings used to take place at the Café Royal in Regent Street, then a sufficiently humble restaurant chiefly patronised by foreigners. In cost assuredly, and perhaps in excellence of cuisine,

the Café Royal of that day was far removed from the stately establishment which has since won so wide a popularity.

But they were pleasant evenings which Gauthiot and I passed there together, sometimes, when our mutual instruction was over, ending in a friendly bout of dominoes, and indeed, if his natural preference for French cooking had not led us there, it is hard to say where else in London we could have found a congenial place of meeting.

Restaurants in those days were few—Verrey's, which survives, Simpson's in the Strand, and the old Mitre Tavern by Temple Bar, were the only houses of note that I can recall. A year or two later an attempt was made to do something on more sumptuous lines by the establishment of the Pall Mall Restaurant on the island site adjoining Trafalgar Square, but it failed for lack of patronage, for the days when dining out was to become fashionable had not arrived.

In 1883, when Messrs. Macmillan contemplated the establishment of the *English Illustrated Magazine*, they invited me to become its editor, and the three years during which I conducted this publication constituted my last important association with Art Journalism.

It was our purpose to compete in quality of illustration with the established periodicals of the United States, the excellence of whose woodcuts was attracting deserved attention in England, and I am glad to think that in these earlier years of the Magazine's life, enough was accomplished both in Literature and Art to prove that the project

might, under happier conditions, have been carried to a successful issue. But, owing to influences which lay beyond our power to control, it chanced that the experiment was undertaken at an unfortunate hour.

The art of the wood-engraver was already suffering through competition with those mechanical processes of reproduction by which it is now almost entirely destroyed. And it soon became evident that the more careful work we were trying to present could not compete in popular acceptance with those rougher and readier methods which, by reason of their greater economy, were already widely employed. And yet it must always be, I think, a matter for regret that this beautiful art of the wood-engraver should be doomed to annihilation. I have tried to show in a separate chapter how great a part it played in that renaissance of Art in England which is associated with the pre-Raphaelite movement, and I am proud to think that some of the best of its later examples found their way into the *English Illustrated Magazine* during the period of my editorship.

On the literary side the Magazine could boast, during those earlier years, of contributions from men already famous, or who have since won their way to fame. Among the poets, Meredith and Swinburne were repeated contributors to its pages; and from a throng of distinguished writers in various fields I may cite the names of Professor Huxley, Henry James, Marion Crawford, Bret Harte, Lawrence Oliphant, Stanley Weyman, Theodore Watts-Dunton, and Richard Jefferies.

It was during the progress, through the pages of

the Magazine, of his captivating story, *The House of the Wolf*, that Weyman asked my judgment on a little play he had written, and I wrote him in response a long letter pointing out what I thought to be its defects, and setting forth the reasons why, as I believed, it could scarcely, as it stood, be expected to achieve a success on the stage.

Mr. Weyman was at that time only on the threshold of his reputation as a novelist, and I remember that my sister—who was reading for me some of the many proffered contributions to the Magazine—most strongly urged me very carefully to consider the claims of *The House of the Wolf*.

A swift perusal of the story left me in no doubt as to its merits, and its warm acceptance at the hands of the readers of the Magazine amply confirmed my judgment; and yet it is strange, as illustrating how widely divergent opinions may be on matters of taste, that the story, on nearing its conclusion, was submitted to the publishers' reader, with the idea of its being issued by them in book form, and that his unfavourable judgment left Messrs. Macmillan with no alternative but to decline the volume.

Needless to say, it was quickly accepted on my recommendation in another quarter, but by the break in our association which this incident occasioned, it chanced that I saw little of Mr. Weyman for some years to come. It was only when I had terminated my connection with the Magazine, and when I was occupied in the management of the Comedy Theatre, that a play was submitted to me by the foremost literary agent of the time, who said that he would not disclose the author's name until its claims had

been considered, but that he might mention that he was one of the most popular novelists of the day.

I was quite unconscious that I had seen the play before, and with this strong recommendation I gave it the most careful attention, and wrote to the agent a long letter setting forth what I considered to be its defects from the point of view of the stage. As I felt bound to decline the play, I did not feel justified in making further inquiry as to its authorship, and it was not until long afterwards that I had a visit from Mr. Weyman, who produced from his pocket two letters which, he said, he thought I should be interested to see. They were my own two letters, written at widely different dates, upon this very play, and it was certainly, as he pointed out, a curious testimony to the constancy of my judgment that they absolutely agreed in opinion, and were in some instances almost identical in phrase.

Strange and amusing experiences sometimes come to editors, especially to an editor of an illustrated magazine. I remember that Mr. Walter Crane had designed some very beautiful decorative work enshrining some poems of his own, and in several of the pages nude figures had been introduced, but treated in so ideal and imaginative a spirit that it seemed impossible they could provoke a protest even from an early Puritan; and yet immediately after their publication I received a letter of passionate rebuke from a reader of the Magazine dwelling in the suburbs, who with scathing criticism, obviously inspired by the loftiest moral indignation, recommended me, if I wished to study my own vile form, to look in the glass, and not, by giving such

indecent pictures to the world, to pollute the purity of the reader's home.

The letter, I think, was dated from the Old Kent Road, and the only pleasure I could draw from it rested on the fact that my Magazine was entertained in so unsuspected a quarter.

But it was not only from the humble homes of virtue that such criticism proceeded. While Hugh Conway's story, *The Family Affair*, was running through the pages of the *English Illustrated*, I one day received a letter from the wife of an eminent judge, who told me that she could no longer permit the Magazine to lie upon her table, where it might at any time be read by her unmarried daughters.

It had been part of the author's scheme that, during the initial stages of the story, some doubt should remain in the reader's mind as to the legitimacy of a foundling child whom the heroine had taken under her care, and it was this suspended uncertainty which had so sorely troubled the soul of the judge's wife.

She felt confident, as she was good enough to assure me, that the doubt would be cleared up in the end, and that the cause of morality and decorum would be ultimately vindicated, but she found it nevertheless intolerable that the innocent minds of her daughters should be haunted, even for a season, by so questionable a problem.

I never realised till I occupied the editorial chair how many people there are whose insanity takes a Shakespearian form. There was, I think, never a week passed without the reception of one or more

articles intended to elucidate the authorship of the plays; and although the readers were by no means in entire agreement in ascribing them to Bacon, they were absolutely unanimous in the belief that the claims of Shakespeare were wholly and ludicrously inadmissible.

It is pleasant, however, to reflect that an editor's duties yield many happier experiences, and bring him into contact with men and women whom otherwise it might not be his good fortune to know. It was in this way that I made the acquaintance of poor Richard Jefferies, whose delightful articles, under the heading of "The Game-keeper at Home," had been already published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Jefferies's appearance, even at our first meeting, gave me the unhappy impression that he was not destined for a long life. But despite his nervous temperament that was evidently in a large measure dependent upon the frailty of his physical constitution, he was a man of great simplicity and charm of manner.

The love that he had for the things of outward nature was clearly a passionate possession that absorbed his life. Of the teeming life of the country, from the waving ears of corn down to the minutest flower or the smallest insect that inhabited the shadowed world at their feet, he was a loving and constant observer whose eyes never wearied in their task. With Jefferies the enjoyment begotten of this watchful brooding over the things of the country was, I think, all-sufficing. He seemed never desirous to link it in association with any more directly human impulse or emotion, and in this way his

writings, as it seems to me, make a separate claim, distinct from that of any other author, whether in poetry or in prose, who have confessed a like passion for the beauty of the outward world.

I was fortunate in securing several very beautiful contributions from his pen, some of which gained an added interest from the delightful illustrations of Mr. Alfred Parsons, who found himself in full sympathy with Jefferies's purposes and design. At a later date Jefferies was associated in the same way with my friend Mr. North, whose delicate drawings showed a quick sympathy with the mood of the writer; and I know that Jefferies highly appreciated the gentle hospitality which Mr. North afforded him in the later days of his declining health.

Another figure which comes back to me among the vivid memories of those editorial days is that of Mr. Lawrence Oliphant—surely one of the strangest, most gifted, and fascinating characters of the time in which his chequered career was passed. No one who met Oliphant could be insensible to his charms, and yet, as one sat in the man's presence, it was always with a feeling of wonder and amazement at the many vicissitudes of his life.

I knew him personally only towards the close of his career, when he offered to me for publication a series of articles on "The Lake of Tiberias," which were to be illustrated by his wife. This was during one of his brief visits to England from the Holy Land, where he had made his home, and he would sometimes lunch with me at the Garrick Club, holding me enthralled, while the passing hours sped by unnoticed, as he unfolded his views of life, drawn

from the deep fund of a rich experience won in many changing occupations.

Brilliant and witty, earnest and often eloquent in his most serious moods, there was scarcely more than a hint in his conversation of those shifting impulses, now so passionately held and again so swiftly abandoned, that had made of his career something of a wonder to the world. Unhappily the task which he and his wife had jointly undertaken for the Magazine, led to her untimely death, from sudden fever, upon the very shores of the lake where she was engaged upon the illustrations for his article.

One of the things which gave me most pleasure in my record as an editor was the encouragement that I was enabled to afford to that gifted young draughtsman Hugh Thomson, on the threshold of his career.

I remember very well the day he first entered my office. He was wholly unknown to me, and without any introduction save that which he presented himself in the form of a number of drawings enclosed in a portfolio that he bore in his hand. With the face of a mere boy, and most emphatically an Irish boy, it seemed to me, as I looked at him, scarcely possible that the drawings that he showed me were from his own hand.

They comprised, I remember, a series of illustrations to *Vanity Fair*, and despite the confessed immaturity of their execution, they exhibited, as I thought, such fineness of perception, and such an intuitive sense of humour, that I was at once anxious to learn from him what he had already published.

His reply, perhaps made with a little reluctance, was that he had published nothing, and again the suspicion recurred to me that this nervous youth, who stood in such evident anxiety before me, must somehow have become possessed of these drawings which he was trying to palm off as his own. He was, as I found on questioning him, engaged in making drawings for trade advertisements in the firm of Maclure, Macdonald and Macgregor, confessedly not a very promising experience upon which to base his claim to be engaged on the staff of an established magazine.

And yet, as I looked first at him and then at the drawings he had submitted to me, I felt I could not let him go without a trial, and, still in my doubtful mood, I suggested to him that he should execute a drawing, the subject of which was to be chosen by me, and that I would give him a fortnight to see what he could make of it.

Almost at hazard I asked him to make a drawing illustrating the social life of Pall Mall during the later days of the eighteenth century, and the quick look of pleasure with which he accepted the task at once drove from my mind any remnant of suspicion with which I had at first received him. Within a fortnight he returned with a very remarkable essay for a youth, and I afterwards published it in the pages of the Magazine.

From that day he became a constant contributor to its pages, and when the series of drawings illustrating Sir Roger de Coverley were ultimately gathered into book form, he at once made his mark with all who were competent to judge.



Hollyer

JAMES MARTINEAU

From the painting by G. F. WATTS, R.A., in the National Portrait Gallery.

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CHAPTER XIII

ORATORS

FROM a very early time the art of oratory attracted me strongly. I remember, as a boy, my father reading to us the full report in the *Times* of Edwin James's defence of Orsini; and in later days, during my apprenticeship in the city, I began from time to time to attend debates in the House of Commons.

It was at about the same time that my friend Alan Skinner and I used to find ourselves Sunday after Sunday in the little chapel in Great Portland Street listening to the great Unitarian preacher, James Martineau.

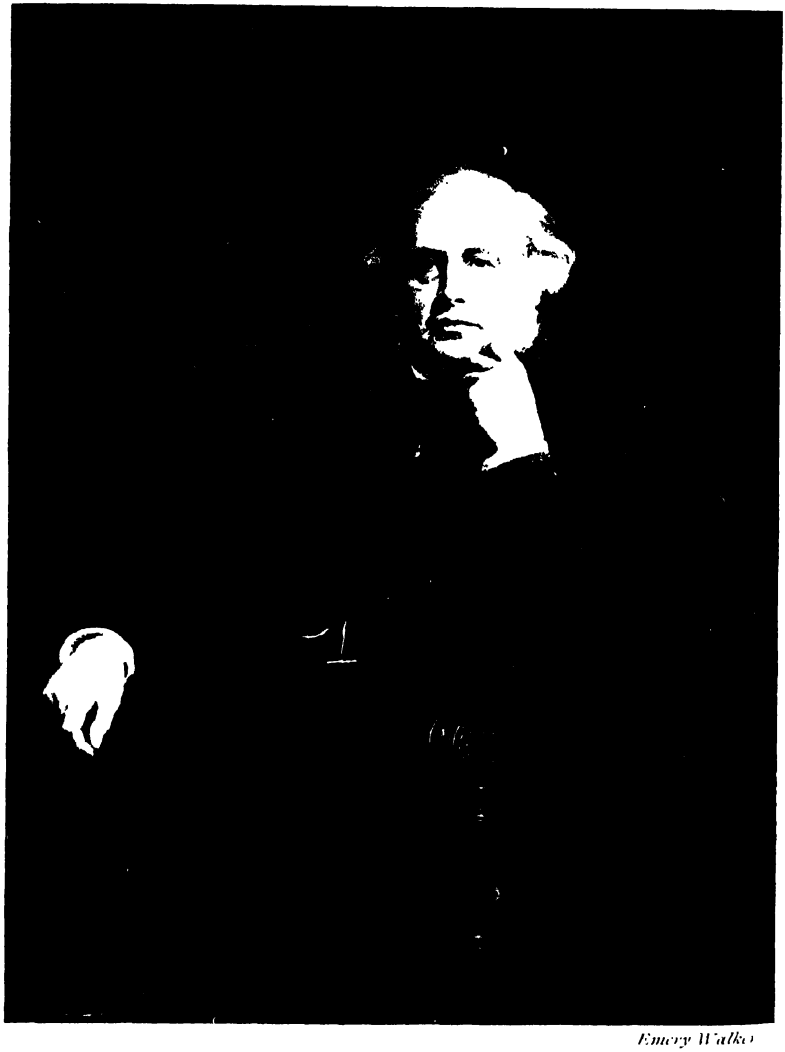
Though not a constant church-goer, I had the opportunity of hearing most of the foremost pulpit orators of that day, including men as opposite in their styles as Spurgeon, Canon Liddon, and Dean Stanley. Liddon's voice was a great possession, but his eloquence was not of a kind that specially attracted me; and Dean Stanley, though his preaching was impressive, scarcely ranked as an orator. On the other hand, Spurgeon's unquestioned power over his audience constantly puzzled me. I was drawn again and again to his great tabernacle simply from the desire to discover, if I could, the secret of his

authority; to understand if it were possible the means by which he contrived to sway the vast crowds that gathered to hear him. But I remained to the end baffled in my inquiries and, as regards my own personal impressions, entirely unconvinced by the exercise of a gift that for the multitude possessed an obvious fascination. It may be said, of course, that his appeal was intended to be merely popular, but I found in the case of other speakers who owned no loftier mission that it has been impossible not to realise in some degree the source of their influence. From Spurgeon's preaching I derived no such satisfaction; the impression left upon me never passed beyond cold disappointment.

With Martineau the case was wholly different. To my feeling, he easily distanced all his contemporaries in the pulpit, and the impression left upon me to-day is, that he and John Bright stand out as the two greatest speakers of their generation.

Though widely divergent in manner, they both possessed an unequalled power of impressing an audience with the sense of ethical fervour and elevation of spirit.

There was no sentence of Martineau's sermons that was not carefully balanced and considered, and yet even the most complex passages of philosophic thought were illumined and sustained by the sense of a passionate love for the truth he was seeking to expound. In every sentence the white light of reason was shot with fire; and although I think his sermons were always prepared and written, they had the effect, as he delivered them, of springing directly from the heart of the man. He seemed less of a



Emery Walker

JOHN BRIGHT

From the painting by WALTER WILLIAM OULESS, R.A.,
in the National Portrait Gallery.

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preacher than a seer; and although he never strove for rhetorical display, even the most logical exposition as it fell from his lips was charged with some thing of poetic impulse and inspiration.

And in his case eloquence was enforced by a noble presence. The beautiful portrait by Mr. Watts recalls, without exaggeration of dignity, the man himself as he stood there in the dimly lit chapel in Great Portland Street; and in gazing again at those chiselled features that seemed moulded by Nature to serve the speaker's purpose, I can almost hear again the tones of that deep sonorous voice which, in its grave and impassioned utterances, stamped every separate word with something of the high fervour that so manifestly inspired the preacher.

It was, I think, in virtue of this same quality of spiritual elevation that the oratory of John Bright stood beyond the reach of rivalry. Bright never attempted the complexity of thought that distinguished so many of Martineau's essays in the pulpit. He laid no claim to the philosophical spirit as it was understood by Martineau, but he possessed, even in a greater degree, the power of lifting every topic he discussed into a higher spiritual atmosphere than any other speaker of his time could command. And yet this unsurpassed power which he wielded over an audience was secured by the simplest means, and often in the simplest language.

In choice of the fitting word Bright was almost faultless. The great English poets, as we know, he had deeply studied, and, indeed, no one who was not sensitive to the finer moods of poetic feeling could have forged such exquisite prose.

I remember my old schoolmaster, Dr. Hill, had been present at the public breakfast given to William Lloyd Garrison in the year 1867, in recognition of his efforts for the abolition of slavery. He told me there was a point in the speech where, after gathering in Miltonic catalogue the names of the many distinguished men who had been associated with the movement, Bright turned to his audience with the added sentence, "and of noble women not a few." And Dr. Hill said that these simple words stirred his hearers to a feeling of deepest emotion, so magical had been the effect of Bright's superb voice as it passed, in brief tribute of homage, from one name to another.

This is an illustration, of which many more can be quoted, of how impossible it is in the case of an orator so great as Bright to realise that astounding influence from any mere printed record of his speeches.

I myself was present and heard the great oration he delivered at St. James's Hall, in 1866, on the subject of Reform. There had been some turbulent episodes during the Reform agitation in London, and on one occasion, when the right of meeting in the Park had been refused by the Government, the railings had been thrown down by the crowd, who had overborne the forces at the disposal of the authorities.

In certain quarters John Bright had been accused of encouraging the populace to such acts of violence, and in the speech to which I refer there was a passage in which he indignantly hurled back upon his enemies this unworthy suggestion.

"These opponents of ours," he said, "many of them in Parliament openly, and many of them secretly in the Press, have charged us with being the promoters of a dangerous excitement. They say we are the source of the danger which threatens; they have absolutely the effrontery to charge me with being the friend of public disorder. I am one of the people. Surely if there be one thing in a free country more dear than another, it is that any one of the people may speak openly to the people. If I speak to the people of their rights, and indicate to them the way to secure them, if I speak of their danger and the monopolies of power, am I not a wise counsellor, both to the people and to their rulers? Suppose I stood at the foot of Vesuvius or Etna, and, seeing a hamlet or a homestead planted on its slope, I said to the dwellers in that hamlet or in that homestead, 'You see that vapour which ascends from the summit of the mountain? That vapour may become a dense black smoke that will obscure the sky. You see that trickling of lava from the crevices or fissures in the side of the mountain? That trickling lava may become a river of fire. You hear that muttering in the bowels of the mountain? That muttering may become a bellowing thunder, the voice of a violent convulsion that may shake half a continent. You know that at your feet is the grave of great cities for which there is no resurrection, as history tells us; that dynasties and aristocracies have passed away and their name has been known no more for ever.' If I say this to the dwellers upon the slope of the mountain, and if there comes hereafter a catastrophe which makes

the world to shudder, am I responsible for that catastrophe? I did not build the mountain, or fill it with explosive materials. I merely warned the men who were in danger."

As these words stand on the printed page it is not possible to gather from them their extraordinary influence upon the packed masses of the crowded hall. Throughout the whole passage his hearers were held as though by magnetic influence; and as he passed from image to image of the long metaphor he had adopted, there was a hushed stillness that was almost oppressive.

Never prodigal of gesture, his slightest movement became for that reason the more significant and dramatic. The greater part of his speech had been delivered with the tips of his fingers just touching the table before him, content, for all accompaniment to the words he uttered, to rely upon the swiftly changing expression of his leonine face, which seemed to mirror in its noble dignity the very soul and spirit of the man.

But when he came to the words, "You hear that muttering in the bowels of the mountain?" he raised his hand to his ear, and at the call of that simple gesture it seemed to us who listened to him as though he had summoned into the very hall itself the sound he had only suggested in words. The effect was as though the building in which we sat was actually threatened, and it was with a sense almost of relief that the deafening cheers broke forth as he brought this noble vindication of his own character to an end.

It is said that Bright's speeches were always

very carefully prepared, and that in particular his perorations were verbally committed to memory. If this be so, it forms the very highest tribute to his intuitive sense of the true functions of an orator, for there is not one of all the many splendid conclusions of his speeches which might not, as it was uttered, have been forged in the white heat of the moment.

No preparation, whatever labour it may have involved, ever tempted him to depart from that strict simplicity of language which formed his crowning gift as a speaker. What, for instance, could be more instinct with the mood of the moment, more directly inspired by the passionate enthusiasm of the men he addressed, than that wonderful ending to his speech in Glasgow delivered only two months before the address in St. James's Hall at which I was present.

"If a class has failed," he said, "let us try the nation. That is our faith, that is our purpose, that is our cry: let us try the nation. This it is which has called together this countless number of people who demand a change, and as I think of it, and of these gatherings sublime in their vastness and in their resolution, I think I see, as it were, above the hill-tops of time, the glimmerings of the dawn of a better and a nobler day for the country and for the people that I love so well."

However careful in his custom of preparation, there were certainly occasions when Mr. Bright could speak with equal effect on the spur of the moment. A splendid example of his power in this respect was afforded at that same meeting at St. James's Hall when, on the conclusion of Mr. Bright's

address, some indiscreet remarks were offered by Mr. Ayrton, which seemed to imply a reproach against the Queen for her indifference towards the movement that was then in progress.

Without a moment's pause Mr. Bright rose in sudden indignation, and in a few passionate sentences vindicated the character of his sovereign.

"But Mr. Ayrton referred further," he said, "to a supposed absorption of the sympathies of the Queen with her late husband, to the exclusion of sympathy for and with the people. I am not accustomed to stand up in defence of those who are possessors of crowns, but I could not sit here and hear that observation without a sense of wonder and of pain. I think there has been, by many persons, a great injustice done to the Queen in reference to her desolate and widowed position. And I venture to say this: that a woman—be she the Queen of a great Realm, or be she the wife of one of your labouring men—who can keep alive in her heart a great sorrow for the lost object of her life and affection, is not at all likely to be wanting in a great and generous sympathy with *you*."

Although the dominant quality of Mr. Bright's oratory lay in the almost biblical simplicity and gravity of the spirit which inspired it, there were times when he could show a quick command of a lighter mood.

I happened to be present in the House of Commons when he attacked with admirable raillery Mr. Horsman and Mr. Lowe, who had retired into what Mr. Bright described as their political Cave of Adullam. He kept the House in a mood of continual

amusement, which culminated at last in his well-known reference to the Scotch terrier.

Seizing upon the fact that Mr. Horsman's party seemed at present to consist of only two members, he added: "When a party is formed of two men so amiable, so discreet, as the two right honourable gentlemen, we may hope to see for the first time in Parliament a party perfectly harmonious and distinguished by mutual and unbroken trust. But there is one difficulty which it is impossible to remove. This party of two reminds me of the Scotch terrier which was so covered with hair that you could not tell which was the head and which was the tail of it."

Millais's portrait of John Bright does less than justice to the dignity of his face. It may be that the artist was confronted by his task at too late a period in Bright's life; certain it is that as I recall him in the years 1866 and 1867 there were elements of beauty in the face, both as regards colouring and expression, that are not to be found in the later portrait.

In this respect it compares unfavourably, I think, with the great painter's superb representation of Mr. Gladstone's features. I heard Mr. Gladstone many times in the House of Commons, but I must frankly own that even in its highest moments his oratory never to my thinking came to within even measurable distance with that of John Bright.

In readiness of debate I suppose he had no superior on either side of the House, but the complexity of his mind, with its ever-watchful care to temper each direct and simple statement with what

the speaker conceived to be its necessary qualifications, was mirrored in the often overburdened structure of his lengthened periods; and yet even in this defect the unflagging energy and sustained intellectual agility of the speaker were constantly exhibited.

I fancy no orator of his own or any other time could so safely conduct himself through the sinuous ways of a prolonged sentence with a sense of such security to the hearers that there would be no lapse or failure in the ordered arrangement of its many modifying clauses. On constant provocation he often spoke with a fire that enabled him to liberate himself from the entangled meshes of parenthesis which haunted him in his more considered utterances, and I remember being present in the House during the dramatic little scene between him and Disraeli which showed these two parliamentary gladiators at their best.

Somewhat rashly, perhaps, Disraeli had indulged in a sarcastic reference to Mr. Gladstone's earlier adherence to Tory principles, and at the conclusion of his speech Mr. Gladstone, springing to his feet, retorted upon his opponent with telling effect by reminding the Conservative statesman that he himself had once sought to win the Liberal vote.

The right honourable gentleman, secure I suppose in the knowledge of his own consistency, has taunted me with the political errors of my boyhood. The right honourable gentleman, when he addressed the honourable member for Westminster [J. Stuart Mill], took occasion to show his magnanimity, for he declared that he would not take the philosopher to task for what he wrote

twenty-five years ago. But when he caught one who thirty-five years ago, just emerged from boyhood and still an undergraduate at Oxford, had expressed an opinion adverse to the Reform Bill of 1832, of which he had so long and bitterly repented, then the right honourable gentleman could not resist the temptation that offered itself to his appetite for effect. He, a parliamentary champion of twenty years' standing, and the leader, as he informs us to-night, of the Tory party, is so ignorant of the House of Commons, or so simple in the structure of his mind, that he positively thought he would obtain a parliamentary advantage by exhibiting me to the public view for reprobation as an opponent of the Reform Bill of 1832. Sir, as the right honourable gentleman has done me the honour thus to exhibit me, let me for a moment trespass on the patience of the House to exhibit myself. What he has stated is true. I deeply regret it. But I was bred under the shadow of the great name of Canning; every influence connected with that name governed the first political impressions of my childhood and my youth; with Mr. Canning I rejoiced in the removal of religious disabilities from the Roman Catholic body, and in the free and truly British tone which he gave to our policy abroad; with Mr. Canning I rejoiced in the opening he made towards the establishment of free commercial interchanges between nations; with Mr. Canning, and under the shadow of that great name, and under the shadow of the yet more venerable name of Burke, I grant my youthful mind and imagination were impressed with the same idle and futile fears which still bewilder and distract the mature mind of the right honourable gentleman. I had conceived that very same fear, that ungovernable alarm, at the first Reform Bill in the days of my undergraduate career at Oxford which the right honourable gentleman now feels; and the only difference between us is this—I thank him for bringing it into view by his quotation—that, having those views, I, as it would appear, moved the Oxford Union Debating

Society to express them clearly, plainly, forcibly, in downright English, while the right honourable gentleman does not dare to tell the nation what it is that he really thinks, and is content to skulk under the meaningless amendment which is proposed by the noble Lord. And now, sir, I quit the right honourable gentleman; I leave him to his reflections, and I envy him not one particle of the polemical advantage which he has gained by his discreet reference to the proceedings of the Oxford Union Debating Society in the year of grace 1831. . . .

I came among you [the Liberal party] an outcast from those with whom I associated, driven from them, I admit, by no arbitrary act, but by the slow and resistless forces of conviction. I came among you, to make use of the legal phraseology, *in pauperis forma*. I had nothing to offer you but faithful and honourable service. You received me as Dido received the shipwrecked Aeneas—

> Ejectum littore egentem
> Accepi—

and I only trust you may not hereafter at any time have to complete the sentence in regard to me—

> Et regni demens in parte locavi.

You received me with kindness, indulgence, generosity, and I may even say with some measure of confidence. And the relation between us has assumed such a form that you can never be my debtors, but that I must for ever be in your debt."

It was only in later years that I met Mr. Gladstone personally, on the occasion of his annual visits to the Grosvenor or the New Gallery, and it was always then interesting to watch the extraordinary diligence of observation with which he studied every picture upon the walls, all the while with pencil in hand carefully noting in the margin of

his catalogue the impression which each separate work had made upon him.

It was in connection with the opening of the New Gallery in the year 1888 that a little incident recurs to my memory that bears witness to the constant alertness of his powers of observation.

After completing a survey of one of the larger rooms, he was about to take leave of me with the remark that he had seen as much as he could reasonably enjoy upon a single visit, and that he would return another day to complete his study of the remaining galleries. It happened that year that we had rather a remarkable piece of sculpture by a young artist who had suddenly died after the work had been sent in for exhibition, and I was anxious before he went to ascertain Mr. Gladstone's opinion of the statue.

"Before you go, Mr. Gladstone," I said, "I should like to show you one of the sculptured works in the central hall which seems to me more than remarkable."

"Stay!" he cried. "Let me first show it to you," and then without a moment's hesitation he set himself in front of the work I had in my mind.

"Is it this?" he said; and on my replying in the affirmative, "I was surprised," he added, "when we passed through the hall that you did not direct my attention to so remarkable a work."

It happened at the Grosvenor Gallery that it also fell to my lot to conduct Lord Beaconsfield round the exhibition of drawings by the old masters then arranged upon the walls. The contrast

between the two men showed itself characteristically enough on the occasion to which I refer.

With sphinx-like face, and with hardly a spoken word, Lord Beaconsfield passed from the work of one great master to another, raising his eye-glass as he went, but displaying by no change of expression either criticism or appreciation, and at the finish he gracefully took his leave with a sentence that seemed to me, as he uttered it, to have been made ready for ultimate use even before he had entered the Gallery.

The drawings of Titian and Giorgione, of Michael Angelo, Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci, had apparently left him cold.

"I thank you," he said, "for having been so good as to point out to me the examples of the great masters you admire, but I think for my part I prefer the eclectic school of the Caracci."

In that one sentence he seemed to bring back the atmosphere of his earlier novels, and to image the taste of England at a time when connoisseurs made the grand tour.

His preference for the fashion of an earlier date in all matters appertaining to taste was, I suppose, deeply implanted in Disraeli's nature, and I remember a story told me by Sir William Harcourt, which illustrates with what quiet and restrained sarcasm he could sometimes receive the announcement of a more modern development of thought.

It was during one of Sir William Harcourt's visits to Hughenden that Disraeli turned to him after dinner and said, "Harcourt, I have had two young gentlemen from Oxford staying with me

lately, and it seems from what I have learned from them that our judgments in all literary matters are sadly old-fashioned. These young gentlemen assured me that, according to the accepted canons of the present day, the late Lord Byron is to be admired, not so much for his qualities as a poet, as for the beauty of his moral character."

Lord Beaconsfield's appearance, as expressed in his dress, even at that later date when I first came in contact with him, still retained something of the florid taste that had characterised him as a youth. The bright colours he chose to affect stood in striking contrast with the impassive pallor of a countenance that seemed, as it gazed out upon the world, like some insoluble riddle of the East. The racial characteristics of his face were sufficiently marked, but the sense of death-like stillness that pervaded it gave it something of historic remoteness and antique calm. He looked out upon the present as though from the recesses of a buried past, and of all the representatives of his nation whom I have known, he appeared to me the only one who possessed in any pre-eminent degree the quality of self-possession in manner and bearing.

These external attributes served as the index of that extraordinary power of intellectual detachment which enabled him to sway the passions of others and to control his own. Such unquestioned authority as he ultimately acquired over the Tory party could, perhaps, only have been achieved by one who used their prejudices without sharing them, and who could appeal to their deeply rooted convictions rather as an artist than as a partisan.

As a speaker, he affected more of florid grace than was quite congenial to the taste of the time or the sympathies of his hearers, and his choice of language, whether in his novels or in his speeches, was sometimes insecurely poised between a leaning towards ornament that was sometimes tawdry, and a genuine and convincing eloquence.

Here again the racial characteristics were apt to assert themselves, and such a phrase as he employed at the conclusion of the Abyssinian War—that we had set the standard of St. George upon the mountains of Rasselas—may be taken as an instance of an essay in the sublime that verges nearly upon the ridiculous.

I heard him for the first time when he introduced his great Reform Bill in 1867, and his gestures also struck me then as often bordering upon the grotesque.

I can recall his attitude now as he drew towards the close of his speech with his arms folded and his head sunk upon his breast, rolling out in a voice, that I confess had for me neither intrinsic beauty of tone nor perfect accent of sincerity, the carefully forged phrases which formed the close of his peroration.

"Those who take a larger and a nobler view of human affairs," he said, "will, I think, recognise that, alone in the countries of Europe, England now, for almost countless generations, has—by her Parliament—established the fair exemplar of free government, and that, throughout the awful vicissitudes of her heroic history, she has—chiefly by this House of Commons—maintained and cherished that public spirit which is the soul of Commonwealth, without which Empire has no glory, and the wealth

of nations is but the means of corruption and decay."

Earlier passages of that same speech had been marked by brilliant flashes of humour and sarcasm, showing, here as always, his incomparable power of registering in a single sentence the characteristics of a cause he desired to condemn.

I remember in particular a reference to Professor Goldwin Smith which was very happily expressed.

"Why, the other day," he said, "a rampant orator who goes about the country maligning men and things, went out of his way to assail me, saying, 'Where now are the 4000 freeholders of Buckinghamshire?' Why, sir, they are where you would naturally expect to find them—they are in the county of Buckingham. I can pardon this wild man, who has probably lived in the cloisters of some abbey, making this mistake . . ." etc.

There are orators who are not orators, and who yet, by some undefinable power of personality, exercise an extraordinary authority upon their hearers. In this class, and I should be disposed to think foremost in this class, must be set Mr. Parnell, whose acquaintance I made at the house of Sir George Lewis about the date of the publication of the famous letter in the *Times*.

To me that letter had seemed from the first a manifest forgery, and I had made several small bets in the Garrick Club that it would be so proved whenever it was made the subject of a judicial investigation.

Mr. Parnell's comment when I told him of my confidence as to the result was tinged with a certain

sadness that was, I think, a constant quality of his nature.

"You may make your mind quite easy upon that point," he said. "I only wish I felt as sure that every incident, in what has been practically a revolution, would redound as surely to the credit of the Irish people. But it is inevitable," he added, "that such a movement must of necessity call into being forces which it is beyond the power of any single individual to control."

Through his chief whip Mr. Richard Power, a dear friend and companion of the Garrick Club, Mr. Parnell had offered me a seat as one of the Irish party, but although I had then, and still retain, complete sympathy with the principles of Home Rule, I felt it would be impossible for me as an Englishman to yield such complete surrender of my independent judgment as was demanded by the parliamentary tactics of the party.

A little later I heard Mr. Parnell in the House of Commons on one of the few occasions when his rigid self-control yielded to a moment of almost uncontrollable passion.

The subject under debate was this same forged letter which had imposed upon the credulity of the *Times*, and it was Mr. Parnell's natural desire that this imputation which so deeply affected his character should be made the subject of a separate and independent inquiry.

His opponents, not unwisely from their point of view, desired to merge the single issue in a general examination of the Home Rule movement, and this view had been, at an earlier period of the debate,

strongly enforced by Mr. Chamberlain in a speech of icy coldness that seemed to withhold the last particle of sympathy from a man who had been so grossly attacked.

The tone of Mr. Chamberlain's speech, for it was a matter rather of tone than of substance, must have deeply incensed Mr. Parnell, for as he rose, with the usual pallor of his face deepened to an ashen whiteness, the trembling tones of his voice were, it was obvious, scarcely under control.

I have not, sir, had an opportunity before this of thanking the right honourable gentleman the member for West Birmingham for his kind references to me, and for the unsolicited character he was kind enough to give me when he last addressed the House a few nights since. He spoke of me not long ago, when he said he entertained a better opinion of me than he does to-day. I care very little for the opinion of the right honourable gentleman. I have never put forward men to do dangerous things which I shrank from doing myself, nor have I betrayed the secrets of my colleagues in Council. My principal recollection of the right honourable gentleman before he became a minister is that he was always most anxious to put me forward and my friends forward to do work which he was afraid to do himself. And after he became a minister my principal recollection of him is that he was always most anxious to betray to us the secrets and counsels of his colleagues in the Cabinet, and to endeavour, while sitting beside these colleagues and while in consultation with them, to undermine their counsels and their plans in our favour. If this inquiry is extended into these matters—and I see no reason why it should not—I shall be able to make good my words by documentary evidence that is not forged.

The withering scorn with which these final sentences were delivered, the tall slim figure visibly

shaken by emotion, recall an unforgettable image of the man as he stood erect in his place below the gangway.

But a still more dramatic scene of that time occurred during the trial itself on the day when the forger Mr. Pigott was to be put into the box. I shall not easily forget the breathless interest of the Court when the Attorney-General called Mr. Inglis, the expert in hand-writing.

The witness was arranging his papers on the desk before him when Sir Charles Russell rose in his place and in strong but measured tones said, "My lords, I shall decline to cross-examine this witness until Mr. Pigott has been put into the box."

This produced a quick protest from the Attorney-General, who, as he declared, was not to be dictated to by his learned friend as to the manner in which he should conduct his case.

But again Sir Charles Russell rose, and again in the same vibrating voice announced his determination as before.

There was a pause for a moment's whispered interchange of opinion among the judges on the Bench, and then Mr. Justice Hannen, in a voice that was never loud but which even in its lowest tones could always command authority, conveyed to the Attorney-General the intimation that, without any intention of dictating to him the course he should take, they were all clearly of opinion that Mr. Pigott ought to be put into the box without delay.

Sir Richard Webster yielded, and Mr. Pigott was called; and then, when the examination-in-chief was complete, began that cross-examination by

Sir Charles Russell which stands out as the main dramatic episode in that great historic trial.

The advocate was at his best, and when Sir Charles Russell was at his best his time knew no equal. As question followed question in quick pursuit, the unhappy witness seemed to crumble away beneath his hand.

But the hour of adjournment came before the wretched man, driven from point to point, had finally succumbed, and, as subsequent events proved, the brilliant cross-examination of Sir Charles Russell was destined to have no close.

On the next morning, when Pigott was again called, there was no answer; and after a sufficient pause to give time for his arrival, Sir Charles rose and applied for a warrant for his arrest.

I went with Mr. Parnell and Sir George Lewis to Bow Street to obtain from the magistrate the issue of the warrant, and I remember, as a comic incident in our brief passage along the Strand, that a little street urchin vending newspapers, who, with the sharpness of the London boy, was already well informed of what had taken place, danced in front of the Irish statesman and bowing with mock gravity said, "Charlie, you've done it nice."

At that time one of my brothers was staying in Madrid, and on the following night I was awakened about two o'clock by the arrival of a telegram which said: "A man whom I am sure is Pigott has committed suicide here in the hotel."

And so ended this extraordinary episode which at one time had threatened to drive from public life one of the most remarkable men of his time. That

he was finally hounded from the leadership of his party speaks, I think, but little for the reputation of those of his comrades who joined in the attack; and less still—as I have always felt—for Mr. Gladstone, whose part in that unworthy transaction was not altogether consistent with the high courage that he usually exhibited in public affairs.

Parnell's was undoubtedly a strange inscrutable character. He was imperfectly understood even by the party he so imperiously controlled: he had, I think, but little desire to be understood. Power used to tell me that on the occasion of an important debate his closest associates never knew with any certainty whether he would be present; and yet once present they knew beyond all question that his will would dominate them all.

It was indeed impossible to be in his company without being sensible of the strength of his personality. His reserve was impenetrable, and yet he could yield to sudden gusts of emotion which revealed as by a lightning flash the strong nervous tension by means of which his self-possession was held and preserved. I think he himself was always conscious of the degree of secrecy, almost, one might say, of mystery, that cloaked his life even in matters where secrecy could have no purpose or significance. He told me once that if he had occasion to consult a doctor, even for the most trifling ailment, he always withheld his name, and such was the habit of reserve that had grafted itself upon his life, that he seemed almost surprised the custom was not common to all the world.

Some of the American ambassadors sent to this country have been notable speakers, amongst them Mr. James Russell Lowell and Mr. Choate. Mr. Bayard also, though not perhaps possessed of an equal natural gift, could on occasion be deeply impressive.

I remember at a dinner of the Actors' Benevolent Fund, in 1895, he extricated himself with considerable grace and tact from a somewhat awkward predicament. The dinner was held on the 18th of December, and it had been arranged that I should propose the toast of "Friends across the Sea," to which Mr. Bayard was to respond. But it so happened on that very day had come President Cleveland's unhappy message to Congress about Venezuela, a message so entirely unexpected: and at the same time so warlike and menacing in its tone, that the tenor of it created something like consternation in the mind of the English public.

When I arrived Mr. Bayard was pacing alone, among the assembled guests in the anteroom, and I ventured to suggest to Sir Francis Jeune, who was to take the chair, that it might be wiser, in view of the circumstances, to omit this particular toast. Sir Francis Jeune, however, was firm in the opinion that the situation must be faced. As he observed to me, "I hear that as a speaker you can skate over thin ice, and to-night you have your opportunity."

All the correspondents of the chief American newspapers were present, and all were in eager expectation to see how a difficult and delicate

situation would be handled by the ambassador. I confess, for my own part, that I felt a little nervous in regard to the task assigned me, and I remember my dear friend, Sir Frank Lockwood, coming to me just before we sat down to dinner and imploring me to say something that might tend to soothe the irritated feeling which the unfortunate despatch had aroused.

I think I must have steered my course successfully, for at the end of my speech Mr. Bayard, rising to respond, was received with genuine enthusiasm by the assembled company. He was evidently deeply moved, for his words came slowly; but he contrived also to move and impress his audience. His opening sentences, earnestly delivered, seemed to still the menace of war and to relieve the feeling of tension that President Cleveland's actions had created.

"To-night," he said, "we stand upon common ground. Mr. Comyns Carr's remarks have affected me deeply. There is no sea between us now." And at the close he added, "There is a headline used by Mr. Gladstone in the article, 'Our Kith and Kin beyond the Seas,' which I would gladly recall at this moment. In that article he used this couplet—

> When love unites, wide space divides in vain,
> And hands may clasp across the spreading main.

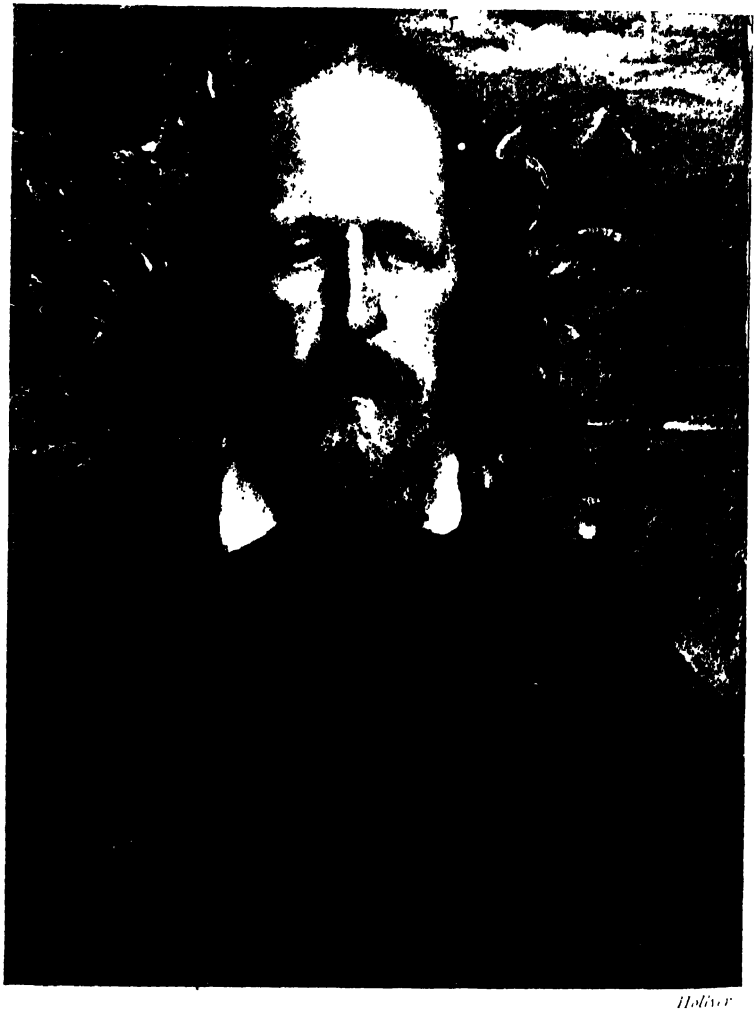
I think it is time to repeat those words. No profession can speak them so well as yours, and none can speak them so well, in the name of your country or my country, as the profession that is domiciled in both countries, and I therefore ask you

to join with me in wishing that 'hands may clasp across the spreading main.'"

As Mr. Bayard took his leave on that evening at the conclusion of the dinner he turned to me and said, "I think things will go our way"; and the event happily proved that he was right.

With some after-dinner speakers their task sits heavily upon them, and sets them in a state of trepidation from the commencement of the feast. I was sitting at a dinner, given to Edmund Yates after his liberation from prison on a charge of libel, by the side of a worthy alderman of the City of London who was also a member of Parliament. His name was entered upon the card in connection with the usual military toast, and before we were half way through the dinner he begged to be excused from further conversation in order that he might concentrate his thoughts upon the duty he had to discharge. It was only while he was covering the menu card with liberal pencil-notes that he realised the fact that I also was among the speakers of the evening. He turned to me suddenly with an expression of blank amazement on his face, and pointing to my name inquired with an air of incredulity if it was true I was going to speak, and when I answered in the affirmative he said, "Well, you surprise me. I notice that you have been drinking champagne. Now," he said, "when I want to sway an audience I sway them on water." And as he drank nothing but water that evening I was prepared to be swayed. But something must have gone wrong with the water on that occasion, and I tremble to think to what further depths of ineptitude he

might have fallen if he had followed my pernicious habit of drinking champagne, for after a few halting sentences, fashioned in the usual mould, he sat down, evidently quite unconscious that he had delivered one of the feeblest addresses ever uttered by the lips of man.



Hollyer

LORD TENNYSON

From the painting by G. F. WATTS, R.A., in the National Portrait Gallery.

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CHAPTER XIV

SOME VICTORIAN POETS

AMONG the great literary men of the time, Lord Tennyson was the first with whom I came into personal contact. When I was about seventeen I used to stay sometimes with Mrs. Cameron in her house at Freshwater, in the Isle of Wight, where her son Henry and I occupied ourselves very earnestly in private theatricals.

Farringford, where Lord Tennyson dwelt, was near by, and the first time that I saw the poet was on the occasion of our performance of Tom Taylor's play, *Helping Hands*, in which I enacted the part of a Jew dealer in musical instruments. As I came upon the little stage I felt almost startled by the great white dome of Tennyson's head as he sat in the front row of the stalls.

I suppose there was no man of his time in any walk of life whose personal appearance was so striking and impressive. Watts has imaged him well, and Millais too. But there was something in the presence of the man himself that Art could not render, a mingled impression of beauty and dignity, of simplicity and power, which I cannot recall as

being combined in equal measure in any other face I have known.

It is a singular fact, not I think generally recognised while they were both living, that there are many elements of resemblance in the features of Tennyson and Charles Dickens. I saw Dickens only once at a reading which he gave in St. James's Hall, and I was then deeply impressed by the power exhibited in the upper part of the head. But it was not until I was looking one day at a beautiful pencil-drawing which Millais had made of Dickens after death that I perceived the striking resemblance between them—a resemblance that was recognised by Tennyson himself, for while this very drawing, now the property of Mrs. Perugini, was still in Millais's studio, Tennyson, after he had gazed at it for some time, suddenly exclaimed, "This is the most extraordinary drawing. It is exactly like myself."

During those early Isle of Wight days Mrs. Cameron would sometimes take us in the evening to Farringford, where Tennyson, if he were in the mood, would read some of his own poems. It was not reading in the ordinary sense, but may more truly be likened to a deep organ chant, and yet it was effective and impressive to an extraordinary degree.

I remember in particular, as he recited one of the songs from the *Princess*, the splendid cadence of his deep echoing voice as it rose and swelled and sank and fell in almost musical response to the changing mood of the verse:



HEAD OF CHARLES DICKENS

(*Taken after death.*)

From the pencil-drawing by Sir J. E. MILLAIS, Bart., P.R.A., in the possession of Mrs. Perugini.

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O love, they die in yon rich sky,
They faint on hill or field or river:
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow for ever and for ever.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

It is impossible to recapture by mere description the added beauty which he contrived to confer upon these lines as they came from his own lips, or even to suggest the strength and tenderness of feeling he could command as the tones of his great voice gradually sank and died at the close.

Many years later I heard him read again in his Surrey home, whither I had taken Mrs. Bernard Beere on the eve of the production of his play called *The Promise of May*.

He read it through to us himself, and here he adopted a more direct and dramatic style, giving admirable point to the humour of the rustic scenes. As we stood up to take our leave he put his hand on Mrs. Beere's shoulder and said, "You are tall. I am tall too. Carlyle once said to me I ought to have been a grenadier."

The Promise of May was not one of Tennyson's successful essays in dramatic writing, and it may, I think, be doubted whether he possessed in any great degree the dramatic quality. And yet, on two occasions at the Lyceum Theatre, under the guidance of Irving, a deep impression was made upon the public. Both *The Cup* and *Becket* have scenes that make a simple and dramatic appeal to the heart; and the latter, at any rate, served to supply the actor with the material for one of his greatest impersonations.

It was while Irving was rehearsing *Becket* that he told me a story of Tennyson that has both a pathetic and humorous significance. In the earlier days, when *The Cup* was in preparation, he had been to see Tennyson in the Isle of Wight to discuss his ideas for its presentation. After dinner, as he told me, the dessert and the wine were set out upon a separate table, and when they were seated the poet asked Irving if he would like a glass of port.

"Yes, I like a glass of port," replied the actor.

Upon which Tennyson, taking him at his word, poured him out a glass of port, and all unconsciously finished the remainder of the bottle himself. At a later time, when *Becket* was to be presented, Tennyson was suffering from gout and was under a strict *régime*. But the same graceful little ceremony was observed, and again his host inquired of Irving whether he would like a glass of port, but on this occasion, as Irving related to me, the positions were reversed, for poor Lord Tennyson was only permitted a single glass, and Irving finished the bottle.

Next morning the actor had to leave early, and had therefore taken leave of his host overnight. But he had scarcely awakened when he saw Lord Tennyson sitting at the foot of his bed.

"How are you this morning, Irving?" he inquired anxiously.

"Very well indeed," was his guest's reply.

"Are you?" came the response, with just a tinge of doubt in the tones of the voice. "You drank a lot of port last night."

I think Tennyson's was essentially a simple nature. Certainly in his own home he gave me that impression. His high qualities as a poet, and the unerring refinement of taste that is stamped on almost every line of his verse, seemed never to have disturbed or effaced a primitive strength of character that had its roots deep in the soil. And yet he was quickly sensitive to criticism, and would sometimes take no pains to hide his wounds.

At our last meeting he openly expressed his vexation at an unfavourable article that had then recently appeared. He questioned me closely as to what I thought could have been the motive of the writer, who for the rest was not of such a rank that his censure need have disturbed the poet's equanimity. "What harm have I ever done to him?" he exclaimed, in tones that seemed to me at the time almost childlike in reproach. But it is, as I have come to think, a sure hall-mark of genius that its weakness is very often frankly avowed. It is a part of that inward candour that makes for greatness, the petty price that we have to pay for the larger and nobler revelation. Lesser spirits can often contrive to hide their littleness, but in the greatest it is nearly always carelessly confessed.

Tennyson's simplicity would sometimes find vent in almost boyish frolic. One evening at Farringford he was suddenly seized with the idea that he would like to dress up one of Mrs. Cameron's nieces in the garb of a man. He got one of his own long coats from the hall, and with a burnt cork himself disfigured her pretty face, daubing upon it a heavy black moustache and imperial, and then retreating

to the other side of the room to gaze with manifest delight upon the result of his own handiwork.

The primitive side of Tennyson's nature was aptly mirrored in the person of his brother Horatio, who, by reason of certain well-considered peculiarities of dress, was often mistaken by visitors to Freshwater for the poet himself. The attention thus attracted to him he contrived to endure with complacency; indeed, I think he was partly conscious that he served in this way as a sort of buffer between his greater brother and the prying curiosity of the crowd which the poet himself deeply resented.

Horatio Tennyson would often accompany Harry Cameron and myself when we wandered over the downs with a gun in search of sea-gulls, or scoured the neighbouring farms for rabbits. His mind, I think, moved slowly, and there was sometimes a strong bucolic flavour in the stories he loved to relate.

Another constant companion on these rambling excursions was poor Lionel Tennyson, the poet's younger son, who afterwards married Frederick Locker's daughter. Locker himself I came to know later in the days of the Grosvenor Gallery. I think few men have been endowed with a surer and more delicate taste in all matters pertaining to Art. We met in sympathy over the drawings by the old masters, of which he possessed a few of the very choicest examples. It was, indeed, his unfailing characteristic as a collector that all he had was of the best. And his personality, very winning in its simplicity and refinement, responded aptly enough to the qualities of his mind.

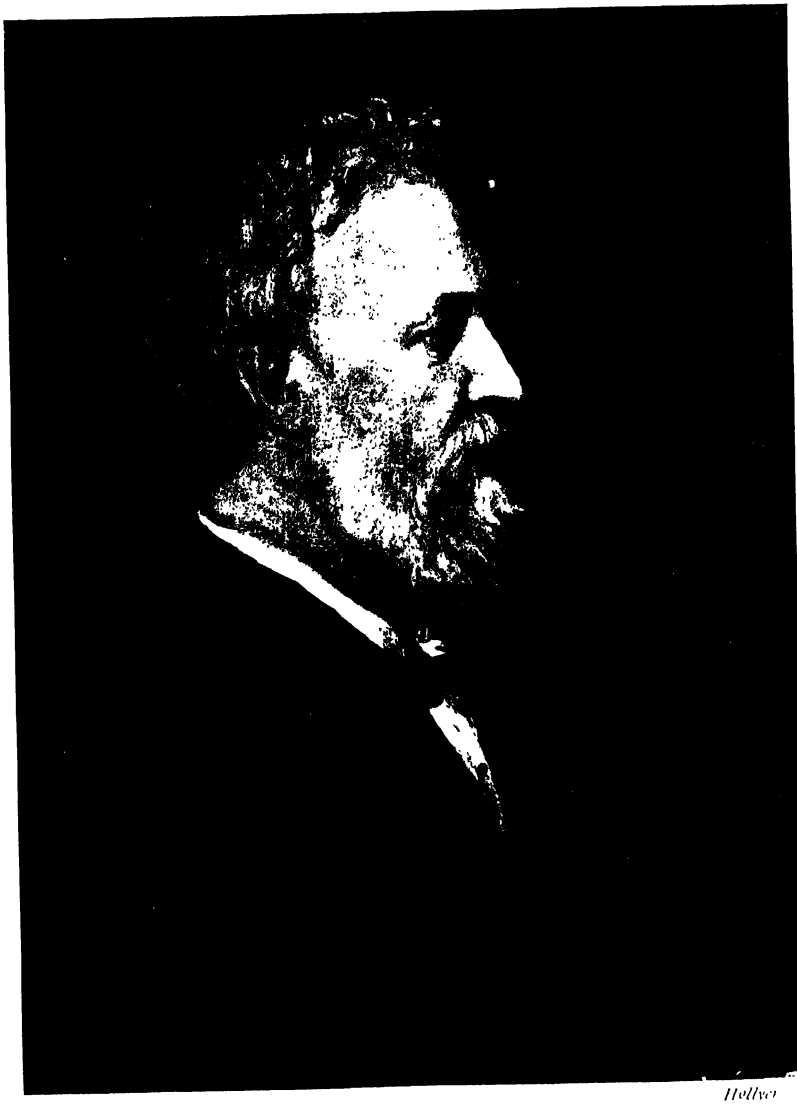
In conversation he would sometimes leap with quaint abruptness of thought from the most abstract to the most concrete things, from the appreciation of a drawing by Leonardo to the sudden consideration of the price of coals. Du Maurier's pen-and-ink drawing of him may be said to rank as the most perfect of portraits—an exact image of the man himself in form and feature.

At the time when I first met Tennyson, I think Robert Browning had won my larger admiration. I thought him then the greater poet of the two—I no longer think so now; and the very qualities which so strongly attracted me as a youth have since proved in themselves to be the source of my altered judgment. It seems like a paradox, but I believe it to be none the less true, that it is the intellectual quality in verse that first most strongly attracts the younger student of poetry. So at least it was in my case. The complexity of thought, even the obscurity of expression which marks so much of Browning's work, had for me then the strongest fascination. That half-rebel note in his style, with its defiant scorn of all accepted models of musical form and rhythmical expression, was in itself an added allurement to the poet's untiring intellectual agility of which the rugged verse was but the chosen garment. And although the spell he then exercised over my imagination still in some degree survives, I find myself now asking of poetry less and less for any ordered philosophy of life, and more and more for life itself. The most nobly directed gospel that seeks an altered world counts for little in a poet's equipment beside the passionate

vision of the world as it is with its unchanging heritage of joy and pain. So at least it seems to me now and, with my modified judgment as to what rightly constitutes the substantive part of poetry, has come an ever-growing delight in the formal beauty of its expression. The two elements are indeed indissolubly bound together. 'There is no high music in verse that is not linked with sense, no thought that is rightly a poet's thought that may not find its fitting melody. And it is because Tennyson, despite his confessed limitations on the side of passion, more constantly than his fellows held fast to the true office of the poet, that he stands among them all as their undisputed master.

In every art the last word is simplicity. There is no phase of thought or feeling rightly admissible into the domain of poetry that the might of genius may not force to simple utterance. It is this which constitutes the final triumph of all the greatest wizards of our tongue, of Shakespeare as of Milton; of Wordsworth no less than of Keats. All of them found a way to wed the subtlest music with the simplest speech, striving with ever-increasing severity for that chastened perfection of form which stands as the last and the surest test of the presence of supreme poetic genius.

So much cannot be said of Browning. There is enough and to spare in the great body of his work to leave his position as a poet unassailed, but there is more to prove that, beside the purely poetic impulse, there were other forces working in his nature, which, in so far as they prevail, must tend to rob the result of that faultless music which alone



Hollyer

ROBERT BROWNING

From the painting by G. F. Watts, R.A., in the National Portrait Gallery.

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can give to verse its final right of survival. This is doubtless true also of Wordsworth, but in his case the good and the bad are easily separable, and the good at its best is flawless. But with Browning the conflicting elements of his genius are so closely locked together that the task of selection is not so easy, and the triumph, even when it has to be acknowledged, is not so secure.

And yet, for all who then came under his influence, the charm can never quite be broken. He spoke to those of us who first learned to know him in our youth with a quickened authority that nothing can quite destroy. The faults which time now thrusts forward were hardly then matter for pardon. For those who come after they may indeed serve to set his fame in peril, but the message he had for us was so overwhelming in its appeal that we forgot the crabbed hand in which it was transcribed.

In one respect, and in one respect only, Browning the poet found an echo in Browning as he was known to his friends. That brave optimism of spirit, with its constant nobility of outlook on the facts of life which so finely distinguishes his writing, was also, I think, characteristic of the man. It was always a spiritual refreshment to meet him. The fact that he was a poet was, indeed, a secret he took some pains to conceal. In this respect, except for rare lapses of noble enthusiasm, he preferred to preserve a kind of austere incognito; but at the same time he contrived to convey even in the simplest converse with the most ordinary people a sense of personal detachment that never-

theless left them free to feel at their ease. And yet, often as I have seen him apparently content with associates who were manifestly his inferiors in intellect, and even in spirit, I cannot recall a time when his own personality ever seemed to suffer by the contact.

I suppose no man of his generation responded so readily to the call of hospitality. He was to be met everywhere, and so keen was his zest in the ordinary traffic of social life that he seemed at times to be indifferent to his choice of associates. There was something in his own power of drawing entertainment from an evening passed in the society of friends that no measure of dulness in his surroundings seemed capable of abating.

He preserved in all companies a constant alertness of spirit, an undiminished sense of self-reliant enjoyment, that was surprising to the onlooker. And yet, despite his unfailing courtesy even to those whom in his secret heart he must often have set in the category of bores, he never left the slightest impression of insincerity. By means, hardly definable, he contrived to keep his converse, even with the most commonplace of his acquaintance, on a certain high spiritual level, and when he took his leave of any party it was impossible not to feel that a considerable personage had quitted the room.

And yet the personal impression made by Browning was not commanding. Vigorous and strenuous he always seemed, and those characteristics stamped him on the first encounter. But they might have belonged equally to a leader in

any other walk of life—to a successful man of affairs, or to a politician in the fulness of his fame.

To those who knew him well there were, however, many little sidelights that showed the poet. Something deeper and more passionate, something more chivalrous and more tender, lurked beneath the social armour that he chose to wear; and it was easy to perceive that even in his ripe age there were smouldering fires of a more passionate experience that a word might waken into flame.

He came often to our house in the years between 1880 and 1885. In our smaller circle we saw him as an intimate friend, and he was a kind and a true friend. I think he was not indifferent to good living, but he was always content with our simple fare—more than content, certainly, if he was allowed his bottle of port wine, not to be sipped at dessert as others use it, but to be quaffed through dinner as an accompaniment to every course. His appreciation of wine, never immoderately indulged, must, I suppose, have been inherited, for he used to tell me a story of his father's indignation on the occasion of his once asking for a glass of water.

"Water, Robert!" exclaimed the elder Browning in dismay. "For washing purposes it is, I believe, often employed, and for navigable canals I admit it to be indispensable, but for drinking, Robert, God never intended it."

Browning's unfailing courtesy towards women could sometimes display itself in a partly humorous fashion. One day when he was calling upon my wife, an authoress whose high estimate of her

own work was never quite confirmed by the public, was suddenly announced. The visit was somewhat embarrassing, for the lady had sent my wife one of her novels, with a request that, when she had read it, it might be submitted to me with a view to its being adapted for the stage. The book had not been read, had in fact been mislaid, but as this was the second occasion upon which the lady had applied for my verdict, my wife basely resorted to prevarication, and embarked upon general phrases of eulogy in regard to the high merit of the work in question. This subterfuge, however, only resulted in deeper disaster, for the flattered authoress at once plunged into baffling details that lay beyond the reach of my wife's improvised mendacity. It happened, however, that Browning had read the book, and, realising the situation, at once came to the rescue, and finally succeeded in persuading the unhappy authoress that the very merits of the novel were in themselves an insuperable obstacle to its production on the stage.

One thing remains vividly in my recollection of Browning, and that was his constant expression of loyal admiration for the genius of Tennyson. I have heard him bear witness to it again and again, and always with entire sincerity.

There was about him in his outlook on life, in his high courtesy and in his unflagging faith in the beauty of the world, a quality that I sometimes find lacking in gifted men of a younger generation. I can only express what I feel in this sense by reference to a splendid survivor of the great race

—George Meredith. To those who do not instinctively feel it, my reference may mean nothing, but to me, to whom the whole achievement of the Victorian Era, in art as in literature, stands high, it means everything. It is not my purpose in these pages of personal recollections to dwell upon my intimate association with men who are still living, but in Mr. Meredith I feel I may make an exception. And Browning has reminded me of him because there is in both a kindred quality —the quality of a superb reverence for life, an undying faith in its ultimate beauty. As literature has fallen since under the conduct of later hands, I find that it seems in some sense shattered in subdivision. There are, on the one hand, writers who seek to be artists and no more, men who pet and polish their rhythmic phrases till they may be said to have reached perfection, and on the other hand there are pamphleteers, eager and sincere, but still pamphleteers, who are content if they can coerce their readers into the belief that their chosen gospel for the regeneration of humanity is a fair equivalent for the larger vision of life itself. No man who is richly human can escape that yearning towards a brighter social ideal. Browning and Tennyson, Thackeray and Dickens, all had their hopes for the bettering of the world as they found it; but with them all, whatever their original impulse, the beauty of the world, as it has been and as it is, outlived their humanitarian ambition, and left them at the last with an increasing sense of its enduring beauty and glory. And that is where George Meredith, still living, stands as a monument of

strength, for worship as for example, to those who have still to come after him.

The hours that I have spent with George Meredith in and around his simple home at Box Hill count among the most delightful of my life. I met him first at the house of a dear friend of both, Frederick Jameson, in the year 1876, and it was, I think, about that time that I had published in the *Saturday Review* a criticism of his novel, *Beauchamp's Career*, which I think must have pleased him, for I find a phrase of his in a letter written to me at that date in which he says, "Praise of yours comes from the right quarter."

It was not long after that that we became intimate friends, and it was his hospitable custom to invite me to breakfast with him on the little lawn in front of his cottage, and then, after the repast, light and dainty after the fashion of the French *dejeuner*, we would start for a long ramble over Box Hill, returning often but just in time for dinner, to continue or to renew the talk that had made the afternoon memorable. Meredith could talk and walk after a fashion that I have known in no one else. Sometimes he would occupy the whole of our ramble in a purely invented biography of some one of our common friends, passing in rather burlesque rhapsody from incident to incident of a purely hypothetical career, but always preserving, even in the most extravagant of his fancies, a proper relevancy to the character he was seeking to exhibit.

On one occasion I remember he traced with inimitable humour, and with inexhaustible invention,

a supposed disaster in love encountered by an amiable gentleman we both knew well; and as he rambled on with an eloquence that never halted, he became so in love with his theme that I think he himself was hardly conscious where the record of sober fact had ended and where the innocent mendacity of the novelist had begun. And then, at the immediate summons of some beauty in the landscape around us that arrested his imagination, he would pause in the wild riot of the imagined portrait and pass, in a moment, to discourse, as eloquent but more serious, on some deeper problem of Life or Art. Not that he ever sought, either in the lighter or the deeper vein, to talk so as to absorb the conversation. In single companionship there was no better talker, as, indeed, there was no better listener; and in either mood he was singularly stirring and inspiring.

One evening I remember that, after such a ramble and when dinner was over, we ascended the slope of his garden to the little chalet on its height, and there he read me till far into the night hours the whole of that wonderful series of sonnets on Modern Love.

This is not the place or the time to assert his claims either as a poet or as a writer of fiction. I have cited his name here and now, because both as an author and as a man he seems to me to possess in the highest degree that superb optimism of spirit which also characterised Browning: an optimism born of no shallow or sentimental survey of life, and yet of strength sufficient to survive all shocks of experience in virtue of its deeper hold upon

those secrets of beauty that no personal disaster could efface or destroy.

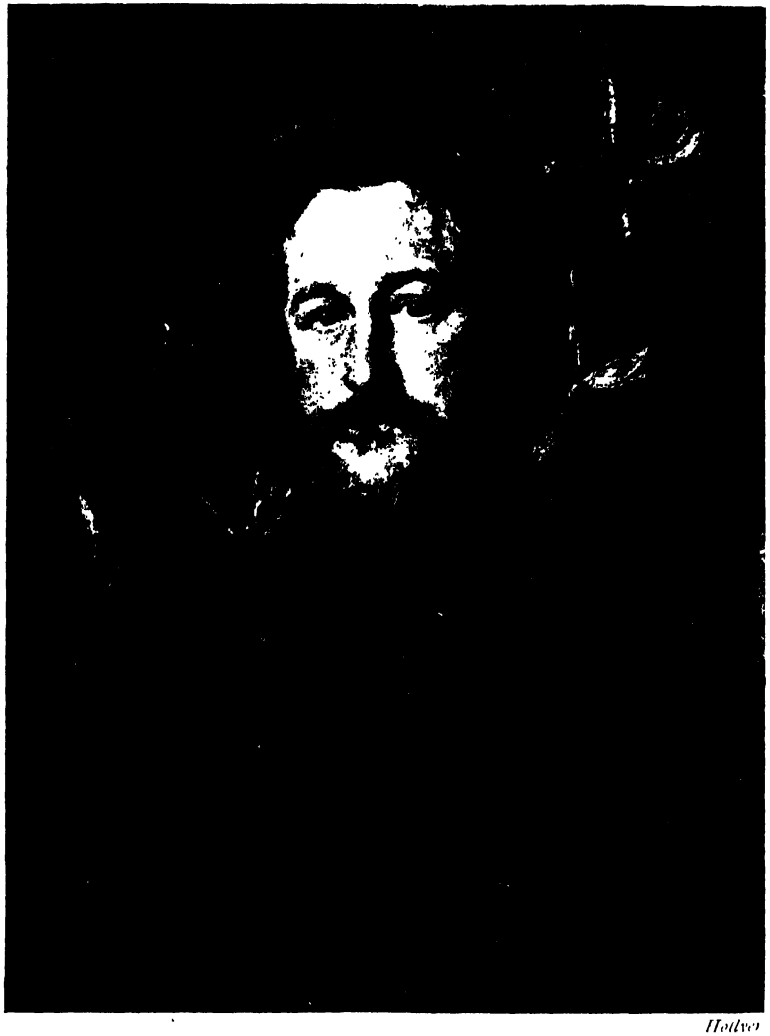
Once when we were discussing the dramas of Ibsen he made, not in criticism but in comment, a remark that has always seemed to me memorable.

"There is no picture," he said, "however overcast its subject, in which the painter, rightly endowed, cannot suggest that beyond the enclosing clouds there is room for a space of blue sky."

He left the comment there without special application to this work or that of the author under discussion, but it dwells in my memory as highly and nobly characteristic of George Meredith the author and of George Meredith the man.

The later advent of Mr. Swinburne caused many of us in those days to reconsider the claims of Tennyson and Browning. It is difficult now to realise the sense almost of intoxication with which the new music of his verse was entertained. For a while it seemed to efface the simpler triumphs of Tennyson no less than Browning's more impetuous but less ordered strains. Its overpowering wealth of rhythmic cadence struck a new note that it was impossible for the younger generation to resist.

But it was not Mr. Swinburne who first awakened in me a spirit of reaction against the elder masters of our generation. Before I read *Atalanta in Calydon* my imagination had been deeply stirred by that first volume of Mr. William Morris's verse, entitled *The Defence of Guinevere*. I had found there, though in a form perhaps deliberately archaic, that deeper note of passion which Tennyson's poetry, even at its best, confessedly lacks; and its appeal



Hollyer

WILLIAM MORRIS

From the painting by G. F. WATTS, R.A., in the National Portrait Gallery.

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was the more urgent because Morris too was attracted by the charm of mediæval romance—romance which in Tennyson's hands had lost something of its primitive dramatic quality, and became, as he developed the Arthurian story, more and more material for setting forth a systematised body of ethical teaching.

Morris at a single stroke seemed to restore the legend to its historical place, and to recapture a part of its passionate significance. I confess that no later work of his has ever affected me to the same degree, though there runs in them all that exquisite and ineffable charm of the born story-teller. In poetry as in fiction there are, and have always been, two competing schools of thought, the one moved by the love of the story to be told, and the other primarily attracted to the story by the opportunities it may offer for the presentment of an ethical idea, or the interpretation of individual character.

They may both reach the same goal, but there remains that contrast in the quality of the workmanship which is born of its different origin.

I remember Morris saying to me once that he did not much care for a story unless it was long, and although the statement perhaps was not intended to be taken literally, it bore witness to that element in his genius which led him to bury himself with unwearied delight in every smallest detail of the tale he had chosen to tell. Morris, I think, was not easy to know well. There was a certain rough shyness in his manner that kept him aloof from the initial advances of ordinary acquaintance, and it was only as an acquaintance that I knew him. But he must

have had deeply lovable qualities to have become so endeared, as he was, to Burne-Jones. It was their custom for years to spend every Sunday morning together in Burne-Jones's studio; and on the many occasions when Burne-Jones has spoken to me of him, I can recall no word of abatement from the deep and lasting affection in which he held his life-long friend.

The influence wielded by Mr. Swinburne over the younger men of his generation was of a widely different kind. That new music of which I have spoken, already announced in the *Atalanta*, and presented with even greater variety and exuberance of expression in the Poems and Ballads, set us all thinking. It seemed at the first as though music in its fullest sense had never before entered into the arena of poetry, and his inexhaustible invention of new metre and rhythmic phrasing set the mind in wonder for a while as to whether all that had gone before was not the mere preface to this final achievement. The immediate effect of the fluent melodies he could command was for the time, at least, to put earlier masters upon their trial, and it was not until the overpowering glamour of these earlier poems had passed that it was possible to reckon at their true worth his lasting claims as a poet.

I have always thought that Mr. Swinburne's handling of language as a musical instrument raises an interesting question in regard to the relation of the arts. Of them all, music alone claims an absolute and independent position. Its appeal does not rely upon association, and demands no definable intellectual foundation. It stands in this way, even

in its most primitive forms, as an example to all other arts, serving to remind them of what there is in each of the essential artistic quality; to remind them yet again of the inevitable danger that must be encountered when the artist adds to his natural burden the task of interpreting the changing ideals of life.

Of all the other arts literature, by reason of the intellectual material out of which it is moulded, stands at the farthest pole from music. Painting and sculpture have their own manifest laws and limitations, which may serve to remind their exponents of the peril which awaits their transgression, but literature, even in the supreme form of verse, must of necessity be exposed to dangers from which only the intuitive instinct of the artist can preserve it. Borrowing as by right from all the arts, and pressing into its service all that has been won in the region of form and colour to enforce its own message of the spirit, it is nevertheless inevitable that to music it must remain the heaviest debtor, for its chosen vehicle of rhythmic language approaches most nearly to the abstract instrument of the musician. And yet, I think, even in Mr. Swinburne's highest triumphs in metrical expression, it is made manifest that the attempt directly to capture the kind of melody that in the last resort belongs to music alone, there lurks a peril that no artist, however gifted, can hope to escape.

It is not in any spirit of depreciation of Mr. Swinburne's unchallenged gift, a gift which, in its kind, has perhaps never been surpassed in litera-

ture, that I have set down these stray thoughts upon the possible limits of music in verse. What I have said is rather intended to record an experience of changing taste in myself in the interval that has elapsed since the time when his earlier poems first captured my imagination. It has grown clearer to me as the years have passed that, even in poetry, only that music is enduring where the melody is subtly interwoven with passionate truth, and that the highest triumph of mere music, in so far as its effects are applicable to literature, must be won by constant cultivation of the simplest means of expression.

To the serious student of poetry such a conclusion may deservedly rank in the region of the accepted commonplace, but some of the utterances of our later-day critics yield at least an excuse for its recall. Not long ago I encountered in a seriously written review the astounding announcement that Oscar Wilde was the author of some of the most remarkable verse of the nineteenth century, and this is hardly an isolated instance of an endeavour that seems at the moment widely spread to make the pitiable disaster of poor Wilde's career the occasion of the most deplorably exaggerated appreciation of his gifts as a writer.

I met Wilde very often in those earlier days, before he had begun to seek to win by personal eccentricity the attention which his literary talent had not secured, and I am bound to confess that, in the light of my later knowledge of the man and of his work, any attempt to set him in the front rank as a literary personality or a great literary

influence seems to me in the highest degree ludicrous and grotesque.

In view of the terrible fate that overtook him, no one could desire to deal harshly at this time with his qualities as a man. That he had a certain charm of manner is undoubted, and that he possessed a measure of wit, as often imitative as original, need not be denied. But there is always a tendency in certain literary circles that lean towards decadence, to exaggerate the genius of those who are morally condemned. A tragic fate such as his, even in one less gifted, naturally tends in such minds to exalt his claims to artistic consideration. It is, at least to my thinking, only on such an assumption that any serious student of poetry, having read the "Ballad of Reading Gaol," could ever be induced to rank Wilde as a poetic genius, or to consider the body of his work as a man of letters, with whatever luxuries of habiliment it may be offered to the world, as constituting an enduring claim to rank him among the higher influences of his time.

Wilde's best work was unquestionably, I think, done for the stage, and here it may be conceded he struck out a path of his own. He had the sense of the theatre, a genuine instinct for those moments in the conflict of character to which the proper resources of the theatre can grant both added force and added refinement. It is not an uncommon assumption, especially among writers of fiction, that the drama by comparison is an art of coarse fibre, incapable, by reason of its limitations, of presenting the more intimate realities of character, or the more

delicate shades of feeling. The truth is that each art has its own force, its own refinement, and cannot borrow them of another. What is perfectly achieved in one form remains incomparable, and for that very reason cannot in its completed form be appropriated by an art that has other triumphs and is subject to other laws and conditions. And it is here that the novelist so often breaks down in attempting to employ his own special methods in the service of the stage. Wilde made no such blunder. By constant study as well as by natural gift he knew well the arena in which he was working when he chose the vehicle of the drama. His wit has perhaps been over-praised; his epigrams so loudly acclaimed at the time bear the taint of modishness that seems to render them already old-fashioned. But his grip of the more serious situations in life, and his ability to exhibit and interpret them by means genuinely inherent in the resources at the disposal of the dramatist, are left beyond dispute.



Emery Walke

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

From the painting by Sir WILLIAM RICHMOND, K.C.B., R.A., in the National Portrait Gallery.

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CHAPTER XV

A YOUNGER GENERATION

DURING the 'seventies I got to know many of the younger men of letters whose fame had not yet completely asserted itself. My association with the *Saturday Review* brought me into closer contact with my old friend, Walter Pollock, whom I had known from a boy, and it was as his guest that I constantly found myself at lunch-time at the Savile Club, a favourite haunt of Robert Louis Stevenson when he happened to be in London.

Those lunches at the Savile, with discussions carried late into the afternoon and sometimes prolonged to the dinner-hour, remain as a vivid and delightful recollection. It was there that I met Henley, a notable individuality, at that time almost without recognition in the world of literature; and Charles Brookfield, who would look in now and then to lighten our graver discussions with his keen and incisive wit; and among others, Richard Duffield, a strange yet not unattractive individuality who won instant recognition by reason of a fortuitous resemblance to Michael Angelo, due to a broken nose; but whose literary claims, as far as I can remember, rested chiefly upon a presumably exclusive knowledge of the work of Cervantes.

But of the figures of that little coterie to which I was so often and so hospitably bidden, the engaging personality of Robert Louis Stevenson stands out distinctly. He carried with him throughout all the period in which I had any knowledge of him the indestructible character of a boy. The conscious artistic quality which marks his literary work, yielding to it a perfection which made it even then a mark of envy for us all, had no place in his personal converse. As a talker he made no demand for consideration, and it was that perhaps which lent to his companionship such a singular charm. What he had to say, though it was often brilliantly said, left little sense of premeditation. The topic of the moment, however carelessly it might have been suggested, seemed in him for the moment to be all-absorbing. However trivial it might be, it was not too trivial for his acceptance; and however unpromising it might seem to others, his quick agile spirit contrived to draw from its discussion something that was notable and memorable.

I think of him now with his long straight hair carelessly flung backward, and the swift alert eyes, quick in expressive response to any point of humour that arose, as one of the most fascinating characters it has ever been my fortune to encounter in conversation. He said nothing that appeared to be considered, and little that was not illuminating, and yet through it all, though his talk could rise on occasion to heights of deep earnestness and enthusiasm, there remained the ever-present sense of the boy. Something of the spirit of boyish

adventure inspired his presence, something, too, of boyish recklessness, so that it was not always easy to remember, in the perfect freedom of intercourse which his nature allowed, that he was before all things a man of letters, a man to whom no refinement of our tongue was unknown: above all things a student and a master of style, in his work constantly perfecting an instrument which we, who were his contemporaries, were very well aware that we used by comparison only as bunglers and beginners.

In this sense I used to feel that there was a striking contrast between the man and his writing. Personally, and as a talker, it was the carelessness of his attack of any subject that first impressed me. His interest seemed wholly centred and absorbed by the incident, the character, or the episode under discussion, and the means by which his thought and feeling concerning it might be expressed, were by contrast almost negligently employed. As a writer, great as is the rank he deservedly holds in the region of romance, his work yields to me exactly the opposite impression. His own faith in the story he has to tell is never, to my thinking, entirely convincing. Something too much of the conscious artist intrudes itself between the narrator and the reader, something that robs the result of the sense that the recorded fact is a fact indeed. It is impossible to forget, I think, even in Stevenson's happiest work that he is an accomplished man of letters; and although there is no great writer who is not, the greatest and ablest allow us to forget it.

Certainly in contact with Stevenson the man, one

had no temptation to remember it. One was never haunted in those delightful hours of social intercourse by the suspicion that he was searching for a phrase, and yet often enough our conversation turned upon points of style; and I remember once in a selected line of a poet, where the fitness of a single word was under discussion, Stevenson swiftly checked our condemnation by a remark that seemed all the more apt because it came from his lips:

"My dear Carr, every word looks guilty when it is put into the dock."

I suppose no one ever had a juster or more generous appreciation of the great leisurely genius of Sir Walter Scott than was possessed by Stevenson. No one by intention or design was more desirous to exclude from his own work the sense of modishness in style, and yet it remains with me as a final impression of Stevenson as a writer, that he occasionally laid himself open to the reproach that he would, as a critic, have been the first to detect in the work of another.

But I can think of him now only as I knew him then, an unconquerable boy with his heart set for adventure, lending to our talk as often as he came into it something of that daring outlook into worlds as yet undiscovered which characterised the adventurers of the seventeenth century.

It may have been something of this fighting quality in himself that attracted Stevenson to the combative spirit of Henley. Their first association, of course, bore an early date, and it may have been again something in poor Henley's physical disability which provoked and sustained Stevenson's

affectionate regard. It is not altogether pleasant to reflect that such affection loyally rendered on Stevenson's part was not at the close so loyally recognised by his comrade. Henley's vehement personality rendered his presence on those particular afternoons at the Savile Club a constant factor of vitality. It was impossible for thought to slumber while Henley was awake. There was no opinion he would not question, no proposition, however confidently or however modestly put forward, he would not immediately set upon its trial. Those were his days of battle, and it was not easy then to guess that a few years later he would win to his standard quite a troop of young men eager to enforce the gospel he had to preach.

At the time of which I am thinking he was fighting for his own hand, and he fought strenuously; the mere love of the conflict was a dominating passion, and if there was, as I think sometimes there was, an underlying note of personal bitterness, may it not be set down in the hearts of those who knew him, and who survive him, as the inevitable price humanity has to pay for the long martyrdom of pain to which nature had doomed him?

And yet Henley, for all the valorous spirit that was in him, was not always proof against sudden attack. One night when we were gathered at the Savile after some public dinner where we had all been present, Irving was of the party. Irving had a trick of waiting for his foe, and on this particular occasion, as I recall it, he was chafing under a criticism which had been delivered by Henley upon his impersonation of Macbeth. Henley appeared

to be well aware that the matter in difference between them would come under discussion before the evening was ended, and was obviously ready with all the destructive weapons that were arrayed in his critical armoury. But quick and vigilant as he was as a fighting force, he nevertheless proved himself unready for the kind of attack which Irving had designed. Very quietly and almost deferentially the actor came to his point. After much genial interchange of cordial sentiment on one side and the other, Irving suddenly pounced upon his man.

"I notice," he said, speaking to Henley in that tone of reverie which with him always concealed an imminent blow, "that you do not approve of my conception of Macbeth. Tell me now, for I should be interested to hear it, how would you play Macbeth if you were called upon to present the character on the stage? What is your conception?"

Henley was hardly prepared for such an invitation, and as we sat in expectation of what he would have to say, it was easy to perceive that the critic's destructive method, which at that time was uppermost in him, could not suddenly readjust itself to the task of offering any coherent appreciation of the character which Irving, according to his allegation, had misinterpreted.

Irving was notoriously skilful in this kind of combat. He was patient in the endurance of any slight which he conceived to be passed upon his work as an actor, but his patience was never forgetful, and when the hour came, however long it might have been delayed, when he thought

that he could claim his own, he was wont to strike mercilessly.

I remember an incident concerning myself, belonging to the earlier stages of our friendship. It was after the conclusion to a dinner of the Rabelais Club, when he invited several of us to adjourn to his rooms in Grafton Street for a final cigar. I was very cordially bidden to be of the company, little guessing that he had selected this particular occasion to single me out as the mark of his disapproval. When we were all comfortably seated round him, and he was reclining deep in his chair in an easy attitude that I afterwards learned to know was nearly always ominous, he threw out for our discussion a proposition in regard to which we could not fail to find ourselves unanimous.

"Now, talking among friends," he said, "I suppose that you would all agree that criticism ought to be fair?"

With no possible exception we were all loudly enthusiastic in assent.

"Quite so," replied Irving, in the same dispassionate and measured tones. "Well, then," he continued, in a voice somewhat threateningly raised but still carefully controlled, "there is a criticism I have read in a magazine called *The Theatre* about a play of mine. Very clever!" And then with sudden vehemence, pointing to me, he added, "You wrote it!"

"Do you mean," I inquired, "the article on *Iolanthe*?"—an adaptation by W. G. Wills of *King Rene's Daughter* which had recently been presented at the Lyceum. "Yes, I wrote it!"

"Quite so," returned Irving, his voice now rising in a tenser strain. "Well, nothing more unfair and more unjust has ever been written."

I was young enough then not to be unmoved by this sudden and unexpected onslaught, but I summoned the courage to ask him, in reply, if the magazine was in the room. I saw as I spoke that it was lying on the table, and I asked him, as the article was short, if he would allow me to read it to those of my fellow-critics who were present, some of whom might fairly be supposed to be unaware of its import.

Irving could not, of course, but assent to my demand, but when I had concluded he appealed with even greater vehemence to those who were present in justification of what he had already said.

"You see! You see!" he cried. "Not one word about me!"

"It is quite true, Irving," I answered. "And I will tell you why. I do not think any one has a higher appreciation of your genius as an actor than I have, and if I could have found the occasion to praise this particular performance I would gladly have seized it, but I thought it, rightly or wrongly, a bad performance, and, out of a spirit of loyalty to my larger admiration of your talent, I refrained from saying so. But I see now that I was wrong. In view of what you have said to-night I feel it would have been better to have said what I thought. You may however be assured, after what has occurred, that I shall not commit that blunder again."

My defence was absolutely sincere, and I think

Irving realised it. At any rate, I know that this little incident, which occurred upon the threshold of our friendship, did not hinder the formation of a close fellowship which endured and strengthened during the greater part of his career.

Bret Harte was an occasional visitor to the Savile, but I saw him more often and more intimately at the delightful meetings of the Kinsmen Club, a society that was designedly founded to bring together men of kindred interest in Art and Letters from both sides of the Atlantic. It has often been something of a puzzle to me that Bret Harte should not have ranked higher as an author among his own compatriots. In his own realm as a story-teller it seems to me hardly possible to rank him too high. That he owed much to Dickens he himself, I believe, would have been the first to acknowledge; but that his own individuality, both in humour and pathos, outstripped any reproach of imitation cannot, I think, be questioned by those to whom his work makes any strong appeal.

Socially he never made any endeavour to press for consideration of his literary claims. He was willing to speak of his work on the invitation of others, and always with modesty. In converse you would hardly have guessed he was a writer, nor did he often lead conversation on to the subject of literature, but I found in him, what I have always found in his writings, a certain reticent delicacy of perception, touched and fired now and again with a quick chivalry of feeling in all that concerned the relation of the sexes.

To his own countrymen I suppose he belonged

to a past era in literary art, an era which preceded that elaborate analysis of the feminine temperament as distinguished from feminine character which to the mind of so many modern novelists appears to rank as the final victory of fiction.

CHAPTER XVI

MEN OF THE THEATRE

My association with the theatre began somewhat disastrously. It was my father's kindly thought, while we were still children, to afford us an annual visit to the pantomime, a visit that was accomplished for our large family by means of two hired flies, which transported us from our house at Barnes to the chosen place of amusement.

But my particular enjoyment of this long-desired entertainment was mitigated by circumstances both moral and physical. We had at that time a nurse who, though by nature endowed with most affectionate impulses, strongly disapproved of all dramatic entertainment, and who, for some weeks before this annually projected tampering with the forces of evil, tormented my spirit by a somewhat vivid picture of the eternal perils which I was destined to encounter.

On the first of these theatre parties that I can recollect, when she was coerced by my mother to form one of the party, in order that her numerous flock should have proper protection, her original antipathy to all things theatrical was strongly enforced and confirmed from the fact that, in the first piece which preceded the pantomime, one of

the actors, shipwrecked upon a desert shore, gave utterance to a sentiment which to her mind seemed profoundly impious—that "what man could do he had done, and that God must do the rest." As she explained to me the next evening, when I lay tucked up in bed, the mere mention of God within the four walls of a theatre was an act of profanity altogether unpardonable, and from that time forward she would never consent to take any part in these annual orgies.

But her manifest disapproval, as the recurring season of Christmas approached, set my spirit in terrible debate between the pleasure I longed for and the sin I knew I was about to commit. That internal struggle, fierce as it seemed to me at the time, must, I suppose, have been conducted with insufficient force on her side, for the issue left me always eager and ready for the adventure of sin. Indeed, so eager was our anticipation of the treat in store for us, that for many days beforehand we could think of nothing else; and so great our excitement as the appointed day approached, that the long-looked-for pleasure nearly always ended in disaster. Excitement in our family always revealed itself in an overmastering tendency to sickness, and from the age of five till the age of ten my vision of the splendours of the pantomime was intermittent, such glimpses of its glory as I derived being for the most part only obtained through the small lunette at the back of the dress-circle, the remainder of the evening being nearly always passed in a state of utter prostration in the ladies' cloak-room. I neither claim nor profess any isolated distinction in this recurring malady, it was the abiding characteristic

of our family; and I have often since, looking back on those days, reflected with admiration upon the dauntless courage of my father and mother to whom these occasions, repeated again and again, in spite of all example, must have been fraught with nothing short of misery.

But to me personally there was this added penalty, that when I returned from each such woful debauch, like a stricken soldier from the field, I was compelled to endure without defence the reproachful glance of my nurse's eye, which told me as clearly as though it were written upon the wall that I had but earned the appointed wages of sin. This nurse of mine was in many ways a remarkable character. Linked with a nature surely the most loving and affectionate that a child could desire, were the sternest principles of religion and morality ever implanted in the human breast—principles associated with so slender a store of intellectual endowment that even to my childish mind their vehement announcement was sometimes grotesque.

One of her most deeply rooted convictions was that the principle of life insurance was a direct defiance of the laws of God: a proposition which she sought to establish by a terrible tale of a butcher of Lewes, who, having flouted Providence by affecting an insurance upon his life, within half an hour after the conclusion of this prudent operation fell down dead as he descended the steps of the market-hall.

Her intellectual equipment was perhaps no scantier than that of many other women, but the fervour with which she employed it in the service of her religious principles might have made her a

desolating influence upon the life of a child, if her loving and kindly nature had not constantly given the lie to the rigid creed she innocently believed was guiding her conduct through life.

It is undeniable, however, that such influences first exercised in childhood are long remembered, and it was many a day before I could quite free myself from the thought that the study of dramatic art was not in some degree associated with a sinful life. It is difficult to say whether this hovering sense of wrong-doing is not in its nature an added incentive to enjoyment. Certain it is that the pleasures of the play-house became a factor of increasing influence in my life. There was an old laundry attached to our house at Barnes which seemed to us singularly unfitted for its destined purpose, but which might, as we thought, be easily adapted as an arena for the performance of stage plays, and here, urged on by a wicked cousin who has since, as a fitting penalty for his youthful delinquencies, become a clergyman, I began my career as an amateur actor. We had at that time a distrust of all feminine help, and chose for our essays in histrionic art only those plays in Lacy's list wherein the plot might be expounded by the exclusive support of male performers.

It chanced, while I was at Bruce Castle School, I had for one of my comrades poor Dick Bateman, son of Richard Bateman, who had about that time, or soon after, become Irving's manager at the Lyceum. Together we became editors of a school magazine, and it was through him afterwards that I won my first introduction to the theatre.

He was remarkable as a schoolboy for a prodigious and extraordinary memory. I have spoken, in the earlier pages of this book, of the memory of Churton Collins, but in Dick Bateman's case the faculty was differently exercised. It seemed in him to be purely mechanical, and we used to delight, as schoolboys, to set him the task, in which he rarely failed, of reading over a page of any author and then requiring of him that he should repeat it word for word. That special kind of memory which appeared to be detached from any personal interest in the matter recalled, it has not been my chance to see equalled in any other man I have known.

I have spoken of him as "poor" Dick Bateman because he met an early and tragic fate, for after a few years spent in London in occasional employment under his father he was sent upon some business adventure to the East, and was drowned in a shipwreck which occurred off the coast of Japan. But in our schooldays, and in the years immediately succeeding our schooldays, we were close comrades, and it was through him that I won my first knowledge of Irving, who had already appeared in several plays in which I had seen him, but who had then been recently engaged by Mr. Bateman as a leading actor to support his daughter, Isabella Bateman, in whose interests he had undertaken the management of the Lyceum Theatre. I had seen Irving before that time when he had played Bob Gassett in *Dearer than Life* at the Queen's Theatre, and I had seen him again in *Uncle Dick's Darling* at the Gaiety, when he had appeared in company with Toole.

It was of the latter performance that Toole afterwards told me Charles Dickens had said, when he saw it, that he thought it admirable in the promise it gave of the young actor's ability; though he had added: "I fancy that both he and the author have cast an eye over my character of Mr. Dombey—eh, Toole?" And to any one who saw the performance there could have been no doubt as to the justice of Dickens's suggestion. It was at a little later date that Irving achieved his first great success with the public in the character of Digby Grant in Mr. Albery's play of *The Two Roses*, and it was after that again that he became permanently engaged to Mr. Bateman.

But Mr. Bateman's endeavour to force his younger daughter Isabella upon the acceptance of the public as a leading actress was not successful. The play of *Fanchette*, with which he opened his management, was a failure, and the part of the youthful hero, for which Irving was cast, was entirely unsuited to his special abilities. Other adventures followed, and they only had the effect of somewhat lowering the mark Irving had made in *The Two Roses*, and there came a time in the steadily waning fortunes of the theatre when it seemed that Mr. Bateman's management was destined to come to an inglorious end. It was at that time that Irving, who had had for some little while in his possession Leopold Lewis's dramatised version of Erckmann-Chatrian's *Polish Jew*, persuaded Mr. Bateman to allow him to put it on the stage of the Lyceum.

Irving has more than once told me the story

himself, of how he and Bateman paced up and down the Adelphi terrace at midnight debating the possibilities of its success. Bateman, as he frankly avowed to the actor, had no faith in the popular appeal of the play, and it was, I suppose, only because he found himself at the end of his tether that he somewhat reluctantly consented to permit Irving to make the experiment. How hardly pressed the enterprising manager must have been at the time was proved by the fact that one evening, when I was walking with him down the Haymarket, he pointed to a corner public-house and said to me, "The owner of that house once held an umbrella over me in the rain when I most needed it, and I shall never forget it."

Nor shall I ever forget the extraordinary impression made upon my own imagination by my first sight of Irving in his performance of *The Bells*. I have often recalled in recollection the sentence penned by Dutton Cook, who was then the dramatic critic of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, wherein he said, "Acting at once so intelligent and so intense has not been seen upon the stage for years"; nor do I think any one who witnessed that performance, as it was rendered by Irving in the plenitude of his powers, would be disposed to question the verdict of the critic. To a youth I know it came as an astounding revelation—a revelation charged with such extraordinary concentration of personal feeling that the first vision of it as I recall it now seemed to have almost transgressed the limits of art, so poignant, even to the verge of pain, was the actor's relentless portraiture of crime and remorse.

It was in Dick Bateman's company that I first witnessed Irving's performance of *The Bells*, and it was through Mr. Bateman's introduction that I first learned to know the actor himself.

In order to realise the kind and the measure of effect which Irving's intense individuality exercised over the public of that date, it is necessary to recall, if only for a moment, the condition of the stage at the time. Phelps's career, in which he had so loyally and so honourably sustained the great tradition he had received from Macready, had practically, for all its influence upon the art, come to an end. He was still to be seen, as I saw him, in occasional engagements at Drury Lane, and later under the management of John Hollingshead at the Gaiety, and it was still possible to appreciate the great and sterling qualities of high training and accomplishment that he brought to the service of the theatre. But the magic which could win the attention of a new generation was no longer there. Its influence, perhaps, had been partly destroyed by the advent of Fechter's more romantic method, which, even in his rendering of the classic drama, granted to his performance something of the charm and allurement of the conquering hero of a fairy story. And on the other side of the picture there was gradually arising a new school, though it seemed to be at the time exercised in only the tiniest arena, wherein a determined effort was being made to bring life as it was presented on the stage into closer alliance with the accepted realities of contemporary manners.

A revolution in little had been started in the theatre in Tottenham Court Road—a revolution due

in the first instance to the talent of Robertson, which was destined to exercise a lasting influence over the theatre in England. Robertson's new outlook, ably supported as it was by Marie Bancroft and her husband, who found and captured an ally of added strength in the person of John Hare, had the effect, for a while at least, of throwing classical drama into discredit, and it was therefore a matter of supreme difficulty for an actor equipped as Irving was, whose vision struck deeper and whose ambition took a wider range, to find a way to draw back the wandering attention of the public to the more passionate drama which for the time had fallen out of fashion. It was left to him almost unaided to forge a convention of his own, and it is perhaps the highest tribute to his innate gift as an actor that, although endowed by nature with few of the graces an actor might desire to claim, he was enabled from this first adventure in *The Bells* to win little by little, and with every step in his career fiercely disputed, a commanding position among the professors of his art.

I think at the first nobody was more surprised than Mr. Bateman at the success achieved by Irving's experiment. In those days the favourite haunt of actors was the old Albion Tavern in Drury Lane. Clubs were comparatively few, and fewer still the actors who belonged to them. The licensing laws imposing the early closure upon the London taverns had not yet been passed, and it was the habit of those who were interested in the theatre to gather in the old-fashioned boxes of the Albion, and to remain in eager discussion over the things of the

drama till the small hours of the morning. It was on one evening during the first rendering of *The Bells* that I found myself seated there in company with a few genial spirits including Henry Montague, Toole, and Tom Thorne, when we noticed that Irving's manager, Mr. Bateman, had entered and was gazing round the room as though in search of some one he had appointed to meet. It occurred at once to the mischievous spirit of Toole to turn the occasion to account. In a whispered sentence he made the rest of us co-conspirators in the little drama he had suddenly devised, and as Mr. Bateman, still scanning the visitors assembled, advanced from box to box, he and Montague, in tones designedly pitched so that all might hear, began an animated discussion as to Irving's rightful claims to a larger salary than he was at that time receiving. I believe, in fact, that Irving's remuneration was something like £15 a week, which represented a substantial advance upon the payment he had received during his engagement for *The Two Roses* at the Vaudeville Theatre; but Montague and Toole vied with one another like competing bidders at an auction in loud proclaim of his larger worth.

"£15 a week!" said Toole. "Why, he's worth £20 at any rate!"

"£20!" retorted Montague. "Nonsense! He's worth £30 if he's worth a penny!"

And then Thorne, topping Montague, said he would be perfectly willing to give him £40 if he would return to the Vaudeville; and as the voices grew louder in the increasing estimate of Irving's value, Bateman, attracted by the discussion, drew

nearer and nearer to the box in which we sat, until at last, leaning with his elbows upon the mahogany partition, he leant forward with lowering brows no longer able to contain the indignation which these comments had provoked. And then at last Toole, always incorrigible in humorous mischief, topped all previous bidders by the emphatic announcement that Henry Irving was worth £50 a week if he was worth a shilling, to which Bateman, now incensed beyond measure, retorted, "Yes, and you are the scoundrels who would put him up to asking it."

Another anecdote, at that time related to me by Irving himself, also belongs to those old days of the Albion. Seated one evening at supper after the play he found himself opposite to a little old gentleman, who was unable to conceal his remembered enjoyment of the performance he had just witnessed at the theatre. Irving, encouraged by his manifest geniality, inquired where he had been, to which the stranger replied that he had come from the Vaudeville, where he had seen the most delightful play, *The Two Roses*, wherein, of course, at the time Irving was acting. Nothing could exceed the old gentleman's enthusiasm for the performers, as he recalled them one after another. Montague was superb! Thorne was excellent! and so on and so on in a liberal catalogue of the several performers, his appreciation rising with each added name.

Irving, at last a little nettled, as he confessed to me, at the exclusion of all reference to himself, ventured to inquire of his neighbour whether there was not in the play a character called Digby Grant.

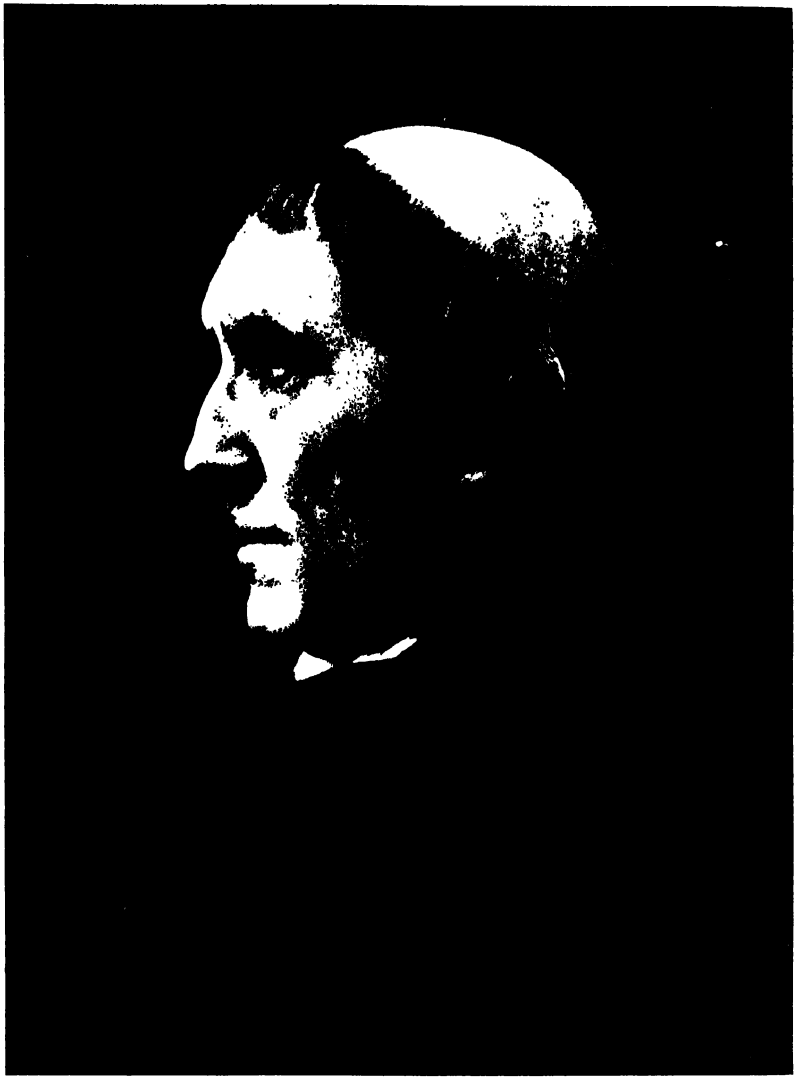
"Ah yes! Ah yes!" assented the old gentleman, reflectively.

"Well, now," said Irving, "what did you think of that performance?"

"Very good," returned the old gentleman—"very good," in tones which seemed to imply that he was only half-willingly conceding a point upon which he was not wholly convinced. "Ah yes, yes," he added; "very good, but, by heavens," he continued, "what a part Johnny Hare would have made of it!"

The progress made by Irving in those earlier times of his histrionic career was fiercely disputed at each step of the way. It could hardly have been foreseen then that he would ultimately win the larger fame that was accorded to him, and it must be conceded to those critics who blocked his path that there was much in the individuality of the man himself to account for the slow growth of his appeal to the public. I have often heard him say himself in later days that his success was achieved in spite of many natural disabilities. His figure at that time was accounted ungainly, his gestures were often reckoned grotesque, and the quality of his voice was such as naturally to repel those whom his individuality did not powerfully attract. But it was in virtue of that individuality, and by reason of those very attributes that barred his progress on the threshold of his career, that he at last reached the goal.

The peculiarities of his personality could not by their nature, on their first appeal, be widely accepted as forming a normal vehicle for the expression of poetic drama. For many years his career presented



HENRY IRVING IN THE CHARACTER OF BECKET

From a photograph by H. H. CAMERON.

To face pag

a fierce encounter between the message that was in him to convey and the restricted means that nature had placed at his disposal. His individuality betrayed at the first, and indelibly stamped upon every creation even to the close of his career, formed at first a serious weakness and again, finally, the saving element of strength in the work that he had to offer to the theatre.

There will always, I suppose, be a radical divergence of thought as to the proper attributes of an actor. To some minds it seems a self-evident proposition that the highest triumph of histrionic art is that in which the personality of the performer is most effectively concealed. To such critics completeness of disguise is completeness of victory, and in the region of comedy there is perhaps room for the confident assertion of this idea, for it is unquestionable that a full measure of enjoyment is conferred upon his audience by the actor's successful assumption of alien idiosyncrasies of bearing and manner. In what is technically known in the theatre as character-acting, this is a goal of perfection that is rightly sought for; and although Irving proved himself on occasion a capable actor of character, it seems to me that his efforts in this direction bore with rare exception an impression of exaggeration.

And the reason is not far to seek. Conscious of his own peculiarities, so difficult if not impossible to efface, he was disposed to seek for concealment by forcing to the verge of the grotesque the personation of characteristics that were not his own. He was for this reason, to my thinking, never wholly

successful as an actor of disguise; but at the opposite pole of histrionic achievement lies, I think, a faculty that is both rarer and greater, the faculty of revelation. Between these two spheres of disguise and revelation lie all the possibilities of the actor's art. The choice of the one or of the other must be determined by the temperament of the actor, and in an equal measure by the response he receives from the temper of his audience. Speaking only for myself, I may frankly say that the greatest impressions I have received in the theatre have been made upon me by performers who never left me for a moment to imagine they were not themselves; but who, without greatly striving to realise the external attributes of the characters they were presenting, have succeeded in the power of constantly identifying themselves with the culminating passions of life. And of course these greater victories, if they are greater, belong in the nature of things to those actors whose ambition it is to present and interpret the deeper emotions—those emotions, I mean, so deeply seated in humanity that their occasional difference of expression counts as for nothing beside the intensity with which they are felt and experienced by all.

The justice of this view of the final victory of the actor's art can only be decided by individual experience and individual impression. Looking back and recalling the performances that have most deeply moved me, I find myself suddenly reverting in recollection to those supreme moments in a great play or in a great impersonation in which the individual is forgotten, and the supreme power of

sounding the depths of human feeling is indelibly stamped upon the memory.

I saw Desclée, and greatly admired her; and I remember, long afterwards, when I witnessed Sarah Bernhardt's performance of *Frou-frou*, how much I thought it suffered in comparison with the original in those lighter and earlier scenes of the play in which the qualities of the heroine's temperament have to be exhibited; and yet, when Madame Bernhardt came to the great scene in the third act, the recollection of Desclée, by a single stroke of genius, was almost effaced, and I can only think of *Frou-frou* as it is recalled to me by that superb exhibition of passion in her encounter with Louise.

It was not Irving's performance of *The Bells* or the impression it yielded which satisfied me, even in those days, that he was a great actor. The picture as drawn, both by the author and by the actor, is so narrowly concentrated upon almost a single phase of criminal instinct and abnormal remorse, that it might well have been the outcome of an intelligence intense assuredly and yet confessedly limited in its outlook. It gave no assurance that the actor could touch the finer or deeper notes of feeling, and it was only when he afterwards played *Hamlet* that he convinced me of the possession of deeper imaginative powers.

Àpropos of *Hamlet*, Irving used to tell a story that was characteristic of his imperturbable self-possession and was no less interesting in the light it throws upon the striking individuality of a youth who afterwards rose to a foremost position in public affairs. It was some few years after his performance

of the character in London that Irving found himself in Dublin at a time when the Duke of Marlborough, the father of Lord Randolph Churchill, was Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. *Hamlet* was the play of the evening, and Lord Randolph, seated alone, occupied the viceregal box. When the second act was ended he went behind the scenes to Irving's dressing-room and introduced himself to the actor. With an apology that was evidently sincere he expressed his regret that, owing to a reception at the Castle, he was unable to wait for the conclusion of the performance. He declared himself, however, intensely interested with what he had seen, and begged Irving to tell him in a few words, as his time was limited, how the play ended. Irving, as he told me, was at first so taken aback that he thought his visitor was indulging in a humorous sally at the expense of the immortal dramatist, but a quick glance at the young man's earnest face sufficed to reassure him, and he then told Lord Randolph the outline of that concluding part of the story which his social engagement did not permit him to see represented upon the boards.

"When do you play it again?" inquired the young man of the actor.

"On Wednesday next," answered Irving.

"I shall be there," replied Lord Randolph, earnestly; and there assuredly he was from the rise of the curtain to its fall, in rapt attention to every succeeding scene of the tragedy.

At the conclusion he again went round to Irving's room, even more enthusiastic than on the occasion of his previous visit; and, with a naïveté that was,

I think, deeply characteristic of that power he afterwards displayed in public affairs—the power of swiftly appropriating the knowledge needful for every successive post he occupied—he made the frank avowal that, since their last meeting, he had read for himself, not only *Hamlet*, but two or three other plays by the same author.

"And do you know, Mr. Irving," he said, "I find them enormously interesting."

Lord Randolph, I think, must have retained to the last his admiration of Irving's talent as an actor, for I met him several times in later years at those little suppers in the Beefsteak Room of the Lyceum Theatre, which formed so memorable a feature of Irving's management. Here, indeed, might be met many of the most notable people of the time, and amongst them, an almost constant figure in these pleasant gatherings, Irving's life-long friend, J. L. Toole. The lasting friendship between these two men, so differently gifted and yet so enduringly allied, forms, I think, a touching tribute to certain great qualities of loyalty resident in them both.

My relations with Irving were not so close or so intimate during the later years of his life, and I prefer to think of him now as I knew him best, before the days of discouragement had overtaken him. To a man of his commanding personality and indomitable will, it was difficult to acknowledge, without a reluctance that sometimes bordered on resentment, the need of any resources but his own. The feeling, I think, was natural enough. He had carved out his career with such splendid courage and persistence that it must have been hard for him

to realise, even when his powers were no longer at the full, that he had not the needful strength for the conflict. But this feeling of impatience with the position in which he found himself, pardonable enough in itself, made him, I think, sometimes suspicious of his friends. In my own case I know he entirely misconceived the motives with which I had sought to recapture for him his threatened position in the theatre he had made famous; but although such misunderstanding must of necessity at the time cause a measure of pain, it is to the closer friendship of earlier days that my memory now recurs, to the many years during which we were fast friends and staunch allies.

The other day I came across a little letter belonging to that happier time which I love to preserve as a touching record of the deeper side of Irving's nature. Something had occurred, what precisely it was I now forget, which caused me to write to him in warm appreciation of the great services I always felt he had rendered to the stage, and my letter drew from him the following response:—

"Your letter," he writes, "gave me much happiness. I know our hearts are one in many things, and I often wish we could sometimes be by the still waters and speak of things deeper even than could be spoken of before the best of other friends."

There was a strong emotional element in Irving's character that could scarcely have been suspected by those who did not know him intimately. Sometimes when he was deeply moved I have seen the tears start suddenly to his eyes, and at such moments his voice would often break and tremble

as he sought to express the feeling that stirred him.

In the summer of 1886 he invited my wife and myself to accompany him on a visit to Nuremberg. Miss Ellen Terry and her daughter were of the party, and as *Faust* was to be produced at the end of the year, our holiday had in part a practical purpose. Irving and I made an exhaustive study of the gardens of the old German city in order to find suitable material for the scenery of the play, the greater part of which was to be painted by Mr. Hawes Craven. We even carried our researches as far as Rothenberg-on-the-Tauber, a most beautiful example of a mediæval fortified town; and at the last Irving deemed it wise to summon Craven from London in order that he might make a few preparatory studies on the spot.

There was one incident of our journey that was rather unfortunate. I was acting as paymaster for the party, and at Cologne Irving cashed a circular note of £100, and the German notes we received in exchange were in my pocket-book as I took our tickets for Wurtzburg. At a junction on the route the train made a halt of some minutes to allow time for refreshments, and as I stood at the door of the buffet a young American of great politeness of manner questioned me as to the identity of Irving and Miss Terry. His tone was reverent and confidential, and as the crowd pressed through the doorway he apologised for jostling me in so unmannerly a fashion. When I retired for the night I realised that his apology was certainly not unneeded, for on emptying my pockets I found

that my pocket-book was gone, and with it about £80 of Irving's money and £30 of my own. We heard afterwards that a young gentleman answering to the description of my chance railway acquaintance had been doing a thriving trade on the Rhine steamers, and I daresay he still preserves my pocket-book as a souvenir of a prosperous day.

It is, I think, impossible for any one who has been closely associated with the modern theatre not to be impressed with the need of some worthier support of the drama than is afforded by the fickle and shifting taste of the public; and the career of Irving, both as an actor and a manager, only goes to emphasise a truth that had been repeatedly enforced by the fortunes of his predecessors. We pride ourselves in this country upon what is achieved by individual enterprise, but we do not always remember at what a cost such achievements are won. The harvest is ours, but the labourers who have reaped and stored it are too often but miserably rewarded. Charles Kean, at the close of his long struggle at the Princess's, confessed that he left the theatre a poorer man than when he entered it; Phelps' fortunes at Sadler's Wells left him nothing to boast of; and Henry Irving, though he enjoyed at the zenith of his career a popularity greater than was accorded to either of his predecessors, had good reason before its close to realise that the motley public of a great capital is not to be counted upon for the enduring support of the more serious form of dramatic enterprise.

It is strange that there should be so much reluctance in the English mind to entertain the idea

of a National Theatre. In regard to other forms of art, the need of public support is recognised and accepted. The treasures of sculpture and painting accumulated in the British Museum, the National Gallery, and the South Kensington Museum owe their existence, in part at least, to the expenditure of the money of the people, and when the Royal Academy failed to initiate any comprehensive system of art teaching, it was undertaken by the nation. On every ground of public policy the claims of the drama might be urged with even greater plausibility. Its appeal as an educational force is even greater and more immediate, and as a humanising influence it is capable of reaching that larger class who are not yet prepared to appreciate the masterpieces of ancient art. Of the countless thousands who can enjoy Molière's incomparable humour, how many are there who would pause before Leonardo's *Monna Lisa* in the Louvre? How many again in our own country, of those who are familiar with the tragedies of Shakespeare, ever find their way into the British Museum or the National Gallery?

And yet the prejudice against the public support of the theatre endures, and can only, I think, be broken down by the demands of the democracy. If a national theatre is to be established in England, it must realise that it has a national mission. The Theatre Français was established at a time when means of communication were difficult, and when, therefore, it was only possible to cater for the public of the metropolis. But under modern conditions a national theatre might, in a fuller and larger sense,

serve the interests of the country as a whole. The great provincial cities might share the fruits of its labours; and when this is realised I cannot but think that, even though the Government may remain apathetic, the needful support for such an institution will not be wanting.

During the later years of his life upon the stage, Toole no longer held with any influence the attention of a London audience. In the earlier days of the Gaiety, where he had appeared as a dominant figure, his success in a material sense then far outstripped that of his comrade, and in some of Irving's earlier engagements in the provinces Toole was his manager; but even in those later days, when the comedian had partly lost his hold upon the theatre, he remained a lovable and a fascinating figure in private life, and I am sure there was no one who welcomed with greater enthusiasm Irving's steady advance to the front rank of his profession.

Perhaps the secret of Toole's charm lay in an entire absence of pretence either social or intellectual. Something deeply human in his nature left him always at his ease in whatever society he might find himself; and, in a sense of humour which appreciated and detected without resentment the foibles of all whom he encountered, I think there are few men of his generation who could claim to be his equal. He laid no claim to any largeness of education, and I suppose there were few men who had read less, but in that knowledge that could be won without the aid of literature he was a genuine scholar. He read life truly and swiftly, genially and humorously. He knew it well because he loved it well. Put him where

you would, in any company, however divergent their claims, and not an hour could pass before Toole had seized with quick enjoyment upon the separate characteristics of nearly every man at the table.

What he loved most, I think, outside of that part of his life which was spent in the theatre, was an aimless ramble in search of fun. Many and many such a vagrant day have I passed in his company, and not a barren one of them all. One such in particular I recall which may stand as a sample of many more. He had called for me quite early in the morning in his victoria, armed with only the naked suggestion that we should pay a visit to the city. For the city, therefore, we started, with no settled plan of operation, and it was only when we had reached the narrowest part of Thames Street that Toole seemed suddenly possessed with the outline of his programme for the day.

The portly figure of a uniformed porter standing at the gateway of some wholesale warehouse arrested his attention, and calling upon the driver to stop, he hobbled out of the carriage with his quaint lame walk, and at once engaged this forbidding-looking official in friendly converse. It was the time when the wheel-and-van tax had lately been imposed, and Toole drawing a note-book from his pocket declared to the amazed individual he was addressing that we had come down to the city to collect opinions on the subject. The man at first was stubbornly reluctant to enter into conversation, but Toole's insinuating amiability of manner was not to be withstood, and he at last drew from this unfortunate individual an

opinion, the purport of which I scarcely now remember, but which apparently, as Toole's enthusiasm declared, clinched the subject.

"If that's your opinion," he said, "will you kindly see to it, as my friend and I are busy," and with that enigmatic declaration he hobbled back to the victoria, leaving the unfortunate porter with a blank look of puzzled amazement on his face.

"To the Tower," cried Toole to the coachman, "and as quickly as possible, for we have a lot of work to do."

Arrived there, Toole at once, in tones of confidential secrecy, addressed the first Beefeater who stood by the gateway.

"What have you done?" he inquired in an anxious voice.

"What do you mean, sir?" said the man.

"I mean," said Toole in a still more confidential tone, "what crime have you committed? You need not keep it from me and my friend."

"Crime!" was the indignant answer. "I have committed no crime."

"Come! come!" said Toole, suddenly assuming the air of a cross-examining counsel. "Do not dare to tell me that. You must have committed some crime, you know, or they would never have put you into a dress like that."

Before the unfortunate man had recovered his self-possession we passed on into the Tower itself, and swiftly found ourselves among a party of eager sight-seers in the chamber where the Crown jewels are disposed.

It was a woman who, as I remember, was

explaining to the eager throng the history of the different articles displayed, and when at the end of a long catalogue, she at last said, "And this is Ann Boleyn's crown," Toole, apparently suddenly overcome, burst into a flood of tears and leant against the wall in seemingly uncontrollable grief.

"Oh, sir," inquired the poor woman in distress, "what's the matter?"

"Nothing! nothing!" replied Toole in broken accents. "Don't mind me, but the fact is I have known the family so long."

Such innocent sallies of almost child-like high spirits count for nothing in the telling, count for nothing, indeed, disassociated from the exuberant good-humour and the laughing, lovable nature of the man himself.

Our whole day was spent in innocent adventures of the same kind. We lunched in Billingsgate, where Toole persuaded the aged and greasy waiter that his purpose in visiting the city was to engage him as manager to a fashionable restaurant for fish dinners to be erected on the south bank of the Thames, immediately opposite the Savoy. And then by easy transition we passed on to the Custom House, which Toole had known well when he had been engaged as a clerk in the city; here he dismayed two venerable officials, busily engaged upon ledgers behind the brass grill, by suddenly demanding a brandy and soda, entirely ignoring their attempted explanation that it was not a bar, and vouchsafing—for all answer to their spluttering expostulations—only the careless reply that, if they were out of brandy, a whisky would do equally well.

It may seem foolish to suppose that any one could derive amusement from a day so idly spent, but those who risk this assumption labour under the misfortune of not having known Toole. His gaiety, when he was in the right mood, was infectious and irresistible, and yet, like all men of such exuberant high spirits, he was subject at times to moods of the deepest depression, moods which grew upon him in those sadder and later days of his life when he was deprived of the constant companionship of his comrades, which meant to him all in all. But even his most sorrowful moments sometimes yielded, on the sudden call of a remembered incident, to a quick recovery of the laughter that he loved, and the unpremeditated juxtaposition of feelings which he exhibited on such occasions was sometimes almost grotesque in their contrast.

I remember on the death of his wife he asked me if I would drive with him to the funeral, and I called for him at his house in Maida Vale, where we sat silently side by side in the little room adjoining the hall awaiting the arrival of the carriage. The tears were slowly coursing down his cheek, and I knew that many painful memories were thronging his brain, for his son and his daughter had already passed away, and by this final loss the last link with his domestic life was severed. And yet suddenly, as we were sitting there, a smile flitted across his face, and a laughing light came into those affectionate brown eyes that only a moment before had been filled with tears.

"I don't know why it has come into my mind now, Joe," he said; "I suppose it ought not to, but I

must tell you. I was having dinner once at Dumfries in a company of commercial travellers, and before the covers were removed the chairman rose and said, 'Mr. Macfarlane, as you are nearest the window, perhaps you will ask God's blessing on this feast.'"

This little incident may be taken as entirely typical of the man, typical of his absolute simplicity, of his total inability to range his feelings with the ordered decorum which conventional propriety demands. In another moment he was back again amid the more painful memories of his life, and within a few minutes we were on our way to the cemetery.

Numberless occasions of idle hours spent in Toole's company I could recall, but they must all be shorn of the presence of the comedian himself, whose incomparable temperament as a humorist gave them point and zest. One day I remember, a day of an early spring, he had a fancy that we should journey towards Hampstead, and accordingly we drove till we reached the well-known tea-gardens of the Spaniard's Inn on the road towards Highgate. The gardens were deserted, and a bleak wind was blowing through the empty bowers, inhabited on that morning only by a little boy who, with a small and, as it seemed to us, inadequate little broom, was dusting the seats in preparation for the influx of visitors that would come later in the season.

This small boy was of almost forbidding mien and decidedly surly in manner, but these external evidences of discouragement seemed only to fire Toole in his desire to make his better acquaintance. He complimented the urchin upon his dexterous use of the broom, a compliment to which the surly boy

vouchsafed no audible reply. Toole, entirely undaunted, persisted in his overtures of friendship.

"That's right, my lad," he cried, "use your broom, and when you go to bed at night hang it up by the side of your bed."

This injunction, so entirely unsolicited, seemed to rouse the boy's ire, and his dormant powers of speech suddenly returning, he inquired of Toole, in tones that were almost indignant, "Why should I?"

"Because," answered Toole, with a persuasive manner that seemed to convey a convincing argument, "if by chance you should wake in the night, there's your little broom."

The boy, to do him justice, seemed by no means appeased by this obvious explanation, and reverted again to his aimless occupation of dusting the vacant seats of the untenanted bowers of the tea-gardens. Whereupon Toole, still undefeated, attacked the citadel from another quarter.

"When is your birthday?" he inquired, and the boy, entirely taken off his guard, replied, "To-morrow!" and then, again entrenching himself safely behind his bastion of surly reserve, demanded in trenchant tones, "What's that got to do with you?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing!" replied Toole, "only I thought I'd like to know if there was anything in particular you'd like for a birthday present."

The boy, at first obdurately silent, at last yielded under pressure, and confessed that the dream of his life was to possess a bicycle.

"Why not?" said Toole.

"There's nobody going to give me no bicycle,

replied the boy, although his mood was now obviously melting under the infectious influence of the comedian's good-humour, and as we went towards the gate to get into our carriage the boy followed us, as though under some kind of spell induced by Toole's suggestion, "that you never knew who might send you the present you wanted."

It chanced that just at the entrance to the tea-gardens two bicycles were leaning against a hedge, and their two owners, flushed with exercise, were seated in jerseys beneath a tree quaffing a pot of ale.

"Why," cried Toole, in tones of wondering amazement, as though he saw before him the fulfilment of his own prophecy, "there is your bicycle!"

The boy was bewitched. Without halt or pause he seized one of the vacant machines, and before interference was possible had mounted it and was riding down the road to Highgate, the owner, roused from his refreshment, starting in pursuit.

In a moment he returned, drawing his machine with one hand and holding the boy by the collar with the other.

"This is your fault," he cried indignantly to Toole, "you encouraged him."

"Well," replied Toole, with the blandest of smiles, "you can't blame the boy, he was only trying if it fitted him."

The poor little fellow, now almost in tears, looked ruefully at us as we drove away. But there is a pretty ending to the story, for I happen to know that on the next day, which was his birthday, Toole sent him a little bicycle for his own.

During those earlier days when I first made his acquaintance and Irving's, I was from time to time, and on different papers, employed as a dramatic critic, and I remember it was in that capacity that I had written a notice of Mr. Wills' play of *Charles I.*, in which Irving had enforced and enlarged the impression created by his appearance in *The Bells.* I think I had done sufficient justice to Irving's impressive personation of the king, but my pronounced democratic inclinations were perhaps justly wounded by Mr. Wills' almost farcical representation of the character of Cromwell. This opinion, openly declared in my criticism, deeply incensed Irving's manager Mr. Bateman, and it was perhaps in order to find the opportunity of informing me of his disapproval that he invited me to a supper at the Westminster Club on the second or third night of the production.

My friend Thomas Purnell, to whom I have already referred, was present, and Irving and Toole were also of the company. When he thought the fitting moment had arrived, Mr. Bateman led the conversation to the point at issue, and lured on, I think, in a spirit of mischief by Purnell, he at last emphatically banged the table with his fist, and in the loudest of tones declared that he did not produce his plays at the Lyceum Theatre to please Mr. Comyns Carr. There was a moment's awkward pause, which I did not feel quite able to break, but which was released by Purnell with a chuckle of delight and the happy retort:

"Well, dear boy, then you can't be surprised if they don't please him."

All this while my own ambition to make an adventure as a writer for the stage had been steadily growing. My wife and I had made an experiment in a version of *Frou-frou* entitled *Butterfly*, which was produced by Miss Terry and Mr. Kelly during one of their provincial tours at Glasgow. But it was not until the year 1884 that I succeeded in getting a play presented at a London theatre. In the Christmas of 1883 Messrs. Arrowsmith of Bristol had published a short story entitled *Called Back* which won instant attention from the public. Almost immediately after its publication I was dining at the Beefsteak Club, which at that time occupied rooms over Toole's theatre opposite King William Street, and I was there recommended by one of my fellow-members to read it without delay.

As I walked home, for we had dined early, I asked at the small newsvendors' shop near my house in Blandford Square, if they chanced to have a copy of the book. By a strange coincidence, one of their customers had ordered the little volume, published in paper covers at a shilling, and had afterwards found that he did not need it. I bought it and read it that night, and on the next day I wrote to its author—known to the public as Hugh Conway, but whose real name was Fred Fargus, member of a firm of auctioneers at Bristol—to inquire if he would permit me to prepare a version of it for the stage. We were wholly unknown to one another, yet he readily assented, and in the early part of the year 1884 I secured the production of the play at the Prince of Wales' Theatre, then managed by Mr. Edgar Bruce. When the

date agreed upon for its production was drawing near Bruce had brought out, in association with Charles Hawtrey, a play called *The Private Secretary*; and, although on its first presentation this was not entirely successful, it grew so rapidly in public favour, due in great part, as I must think, to Mr. Beerbohm Tree's admirable creation of the part of the curate, that there came a moment when Hawtrey very ardently desired that I should postpone the performance of *Called Back*.

He offered me as an inducement such a liberal share in the profits of his own piece as would, as the event proved, have yielded me something like a handsome fortune. But with the vanity of a young dramatic writer—in this instance supported by the fact that in Hugh Conway's interests it was imperative *Called Back* should not be delayed, lest our joint chance of success should be imperilled by piracy—I held fast by my agreement with the management, and further insisted as an integral part of that agreement that Mr. Beerbohm Tree, whose services Mr. Hawtrey desired to retain, should be engaged by Mr. Bruce for the part of Macari. Nor did I see cause to regret my decision; for, apart from the fact that *Called Back* itself proved an instant success which yielded to Conway and to myself, both in England, in America, and Australia, a substantial reward, its production was the means of forming two valued friendships, the one with Hugh Conway, only severed by his untimely death, the other with Beerbohm Tree, sustained and strengthened as the years have passed, and still surviving in a spirit of loyal comradeship on his side and on mine.

Hugh Conway's was a lovable nature, and if his talent, as displayed in later efforts has not been appreciated at its true value, the reason perhaps may be sought in the fact that the glamour of his first essay in fiction was sufficient to overshadow the work of his later years. But he had, as I think, a power in the suggestion of the supernatural altogether exceptional, and although his style affected no literary grace, he had the art of contriving and weaving a story so as to arrest and enchain the attention of the reader. From the time of our first association we became firm friends, and I believe my name was almost the last upon his lips when he met his untimely death from fever on the Riviera. At his wish I dramatised the next of his Christmas books, entitled *Dark Days*, which was presented at the Haymarket Theatre in the following year, but it proved less acceptable to the public. He also published under my editorship, in the *English Illustrated Magazine*, a serial story called *A Family Affair*, and a few shorter tales, one of which, entitled *Paul Vargas*, possessed something of the weird mysticism of Edgar Allan Poe.

Previous to the publishing of *Called Back* he had issued in one of the magazines an amusing little story illustrating the fortunes of two collectors of old china, which he allowed me to employ as the basis of a piece I presented at St. George's Hall under the title of *The United Pair*. The German Reeds' entertainment is now a thing of the past, but it occupied in those days a unique position as satisfying those whose religious scruples did not allow them to visit or to patronise regular theatrical

entertainments. I remember as a child having been taken to the Gallery of Illustration in Regent Street, occupying, I fancy, the site now tenanted by the Raleigh Club, to see Miss Priscilla Horton, the originator of this special form of entertainment who afterwards, as Mrs. German Reed, gave a permanent name to the programme presented for so many years at St. George's Hall.

At first the German Reeds had been associated with Mr. Parry, whose place, in my time, was occupied by my friend Corney Grain. Mr. and Mrs. Reed in those later days were both dead, and the purely dramatic part of the bill was under the direction of Alfred Reed their son, with whom I had many pleasant hours of association in the several pieces I wrote for him. *The Cabinet Secret* was followed by *The Friar*, a rather more ambitious experiment in verse, and that again was succeeded by *The Naturalist*, the last of my contributions to the performances at St. George's Hall.

It is hard in these days, when the earlier prejudices against the theatre are so nearly effaced, to realise the extraordinary vogue which this particular class of entertainment enjoyed. An author who wrote for the German Reeds had to tread warily, and the presence of a harmonium, as the sole support of the piano in the orchestra, was there constantly to remind him of the somewhat orthodox tone he was enjoined to observe.

Corney Grain, who in later days rarely appeared in the dramatic part of the programme, was a host in himself when he was seated at the piano, inimitable as he was in humorous perception of the lighter

foibles of the day. For years he was a constant figure at the Beefsteak Club, where in private life he betrayed the same quick glance into the little idiosyncrasies of individual character allied to a power of ridicule that never sought to wound, and a deeply seated geniality of nature that won him many friends, and never, as I think, a single enemy.

Of all the entertainers in this kind who have sought single-handed to amuse the public, partly in humorous characterisation and partly through musical accomplishment, he remains, as far as my impression goes, easily first in the class he represented.

A chapter of pleasant memories in the earlier days of my theatrical association is provided by a little club called "The Lambs," to which I have already alluded. It had been founded in 1868, and I suppose it was about the year 1870 that I was admitted into the fold. Though not exclusively composed of actors, it was mainly concerned with interests that were theatrical, and it was there I first met Sir Squire Bancroft and Sir John Hare, in days when neither dreamed of the distinction of a title, and when both, indeed, were little past the threshold of their fame. There were no matinées then, and so we were enabled to meet for dinner on every Saturday during the autumn and winter at the pleasant hour of four o'clock.

When I first joined the society our meeting-place was at the old Gaiety Restaurant, but afterwards we moved to the Albemarle Hotel, then an old-fashioned hostelry at the corner of Piccadilly, which has long been supplanted by a more modern structure.

They were the pleasantest gatherings that I can recall as being connected with that period of my youth. The rules of our Club prescribed just that little touch of ceremony and ritual by which grown men when they come together for social purposes prove themselves to be so nearly allied to children, and as a part of that ceremonial it was ordained that the "Shepherd" of the day, an office filled in rotation, had, at the summons of a graceful little silver bell, designed by one of our members, Fred Jameson, the right to call upon any one of those present whom he chose to select for a speech, which, with its reply, was all in the way of oratory that our rules permitted.

It was in this way that I first encountered that handsomest and gayest of young actors, H. J. Montague, whose charm exercised a widespread fascination upon the play-goers of his day, and who was further, and quite independently of such histrionic gifts as he could boast, a companion of the most sympathetic spirit. If not endowed with absolute wit, he could so infect the recital of the most ordinary adventures that he had encountered during the day with something of the rollicking sense of boyishness that was his own, as to keep his hearers in a mood of unflagging merriment and enjoyment.

But on one particular occasion, which I recall, he was bidding for a victory that lay not quite so easily within his reach. Chosen by the chairman as the spokesman of the day, he had selected me, perhaps because I was the youngest member of the Club, as the object of his raillery, and I remember now the look of amazement, almost of consternation,

on his face when I replied to him in something of the same spirit which animated his own speech, and retorted with unsparing ridicule upon his own qualifications as an actor and as a member of our little society.

Joyous, indeed, were those weekly meetings of "The Lambs," where we met in eager appreciation of that new birth in the drama inaugurated by Tom Robertson, and which was being presented, with so loyal a faith in their mission, by the company which Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft had gathered together in the little house in Tottenham Court Road. We were all enthusiasts, all animated by a firm faith in the future of the drama we loved, all supported by the thought that to-morrow would see the dawn of such a new birth of drama upon the stage as England had not witnessed for many a generation. And even looking back now it seems plain to me that the movement in which we were taking a part was not without its direct and important influence upon the new spirit that had crept into the theatre.

It is difficult now quite to realise the warmth of welcome we were then glad to bestow upon that little revolution which must be always associated with the Prince of Wales's Theatre under the management of the Bancrofts. The return to realism which was there sought, and in a measure achieved, was exercised only in a narrow compass, and with an outlook that was restricted and limited. But it was designed to have a larger influence than seemed possible from such modest beginnings. It sought no triumphs which were not within the region of comedy, and that comedy itself did not strive for

the interpretation of more than the current sentiments of the time. But, by its earnest endeavour to bring the life as presented upon the stage into closer contact with the life of its time, it served to exercise an influence upon the art of the future in a wider and a deeper sense than was, perhaps, quite consciously entertained by those who were conducting its efforts.

CHAPTER XVII

SOCIAL HOURS

THE recollection of many pleasant hours spent at the Lambs Club recalls other social gatherings which have lightened my life as a man of letters. Of society, strictly so called, I have known but little. A few occasional excursions into the higher realms have come to me accidentally, and my experiences of such more formal gatherings were never of a kind to tempt me to strive with any earnest ambition for those more dignified joys which must, I presume, be highly prized by those who seek them.

The drift of modern life has, indeed, broken down many of the barriers of an earlier time, and the dividing line between Bohemia and Society, properly so called, is now often effaced by ambition on the one side or by curiosity on the other.

Here, however, I shall only speak of those more intimate gatherings where artists of various callings were wont to meet, and the first in my recollection are those associated with the pleasant Sunday evenings at the house of Dr. Westland Marston, whose simple hospitality drew many interesting folk to his table.

It was there I first met the beautiful Adelaide Neilson, whose picturesque and romantic career would vie in interest, if it could ever be recorded, with that of Lady Hamilton herself. Certainly her changing fortunes were no less sudden in their contrast, for, although she came of humble origin, she was at the time when I first knew her widely worshipped as a beauty and as an actress.

Dr. Westland Marston himself had, like Rossetti, though not in an equal degree, the power of inspiring and encouraging younger men, whom he loved to draw about him. While I was still at school I had already read his play of *The Patrician's Daughter*, a play chiefly interesting from a literary point of view by reason of its endeavour to treat a purely modern theme through the medium of blank verse. Some of his shorter poems were also known to me, and as he was the first man of any rank in literature with whom I had become personally acquainted, I was glad of the opportunity which those Sunday evenings afforded me to know him better.

No man had ever a more real delight in literature or a clearer or more delicate perception of its finer qualities. I think it was Joseph Knight who first introduced me to him, and in the years when I was making my first efforts in journalism it was a constant delight to me to find that I was a welcome visitor at his house.

He had been impressed, as Knight told me, by a review I had written in the *Globe* of the poems of Joachim Miller, and I remember the warm words of encouragement with which he greeted me on my first visit to his house.

It was there I met Mrs. Lynn-Linton, whose articles in the *Saturday Review* on "The Girl of the Period" were at the time attracting a considerable amount of attention. Afterwards I got to know her well, and learnt to discover in her earnest, enthusiastic nature qualities that struck much deeper than the superficial satire which she had exercised in this series of papers exploiting the foibles of her sex.

Another house where artists and men of letters were warmly welcomed was that of Dr. Schlesinger, who was for many years the valued English correspondent of the *Cologne Gazette*. Dr. Max Schlesinger, in virtue of very considerable gifts both as a politician and as a man of letters, and even more perhaps by qualities of personal character that made him widely trusted, occupied an exceptional position in the world of journalism in London. His known discretion as a publicist won for him the confidence of the most eminent of our statesmen, but the associations of this kind which belonged to his life as a journalist, never led him to desert or to neglect that purely artistic environment to which by inclination and culture he naturally belonged.

Nothing could have been more simple, more entirely unostentatious than the hospitality offered on those pleasant weekly evenings in Dr. Schlesinger's house. It was, I think, a valued rendezvous to all who considered themselves welcome, for it was Dr. Schlesinger's privilege, partly due perhaps to the exceptional position he occupied, that he was able to make his house a delightful meeting-place for the leaders of thought in many depart-

ments, and for the most prominent artists of every nationality.

It was there I first met Mr. G. H. Boughton, then a young and struggling painter, who, if not American by birth, was at any rate American by long association, and who afterwards achieved in England a deservedly high place among his comrades. Mr. and Mrs. Boughton, before they built their house upon Campden Hill, had begun to be known as accepted hosts by a large body of artistic society, and in later days the big studio at Campden Hill became the scene of many joyous entertainments, which occasionally took the form of fancy dress. Mr. Boughton, whatever may be the final verdict on his own artistic achievement, was a man of fine taste and delicate perception, both in the region of art and in the wider field of literature. It was there I first met Robert Browning, a constant guest at the Boughtons' dinners, which, with the larger parties they sometimes entertained, became for many years an accepted meeting-place for nearly all who were interested in art.

A little later, when the Grosvenor Gallery was established, the Sunday afternoon parties, so graciously presided over by Lady Lindsay, quickly established themselves as a social feature of the time. A part of the mission which Sir Coutts and Lady Lindsay had accepted was the establishment of a closer link between the professors of the plastic arts and the representatives of cultivated society; and certainly, while these afternoons endured, they served their purpose admirably well, and proved the means, to those who attended them, of forming

many new and valued friendships. I remember one of those pleasant assemblies being suddenly and very sadly interrupted by the arrival of Montague Corry, afterwards Lord Rowton, who was the bearer of the appalling announcement of the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke.

Of later hosts and hostesses who have especially distinguished themselves by the cultivation of the more artistic aspect of society it would be possible to speak with fuller appreciation, if it were not that they are still amongst us and still discharging those graceful duties of hospitality. Sir George and Lady Lewis, while they still occupied their beautiful cottage at Walton, made us all welcome, and the days I have spent there in company with Burne-Jones remain among the sweetest memories of that earlier time. Nor less delightful are the recollections which gather about those memorable Tuesday evenings which for many years have been enjoyed by the friends of Sir Lawrence and Lady Tadema.

The instinct of hospitality belongs to many kindly hosts; the genius of hospitality is rare, but it would be conceded, I think, by all—who for so many years have been welcomed, first to Townsend House overlooking Regent's Park, and in later days to that larger and more spacious studio which stands in the Grove End Road—to Sir Lawrence and Lady Tadema. The last Tuesday evening we spent in Townsend House comes back vividly to me now. I think all of us who were there were a little moved at the thought that there should be even a temporary break in the continuity of these weekly gatherings; some of us, perhaps, were also a little afraid lest the

new order of things in that larger house towards which our hosts were flitting should be robbed of some of the intimacy we had so long enjoyed.

But such fears, if they existed, were quickly dispelled when we were once more welcomed to the new abode. The change belonged only to the building; our host and hostess have remained unalterable in the loyalty of their friendship.

It was at the house now occupied by Sir Alma Tadema that at one time I used to dine with the French painter, James Tissot, a man whose varied moods of changing ambition and alternating ideals leave him almost without a parallel among the painters of the time. Tissot was one of the first contributors to the exhibition of the Grosvenor Gallery, his talent at the time being almost entirely preoccupied by a modish type of modern feminine beauty.

In those earlier exhibitions he found such lighter essays of his hung in close juxtaposition with the widely different work of Burne-Jones, and dining with him at about this time I could see that his mind was deeply exercised by the impression the English painter had made upon him.

"Mon ami," he confided to me, "je vois qu'il y a quelque chose à faire, là."

And accordingly, before the next year's exhibition had come round he had ventured his experiment in the region of what he thought to be ideal art. But the leap was too long for so brief a period of preparation, and I remember that his friend Heilbuth, who was present at the dinner of that second year, made sad havoc with the painter's schemes by

ridiculing the little card upon which Tissot had set forth his symbolical intentions. He treated the written description of the pictures as though it were a menu of the feast that awaited us, crying out each course from the beginning: "Potage une dame avec un serpent, qui signifie——" But at this point the incensed Tissot snatched the paper from his hand, and amid a roar of laughter, in which perhaps the painter did not very heartily join, we went in to dinner.

But that sudden ambition, though it was not capable of immediate fulfilment, implied a deeper strain in Tissot's nature which was destined to find expression at a later day. Shortly afterwards he left England, and it was many years before I saw him again, hard at work in his studio in Paris upon the completion of a series of designs in illustration of the Life of Christ. Those designs exhibited an extraordinary persistence in the interpretation of local truth, for he had made a long sojourn in the Holy Land in order to fit himself for the task, and they showed besides an occasional intensity of feeling that lay dormant and unsuspected in the man as I knew him first. What was the real kernel of such a nature it is hard to say. The man himself, although in those earlier days he displayed little but the evident ambition to make his art remunerative, nevertheless, by occasional glimpses, betrayed the elements of a deeper purpose underlying the life that was preoccupying him at the moment.

A strange figure, a strange individuality, yielding by turns to impulses the lightest and the most devout, but always, however he might be engaged,

proving himself the possessor of an extraordinary industry and a remarkable talent!

I have already alluded to the suppers in the Beefsteak Room as among the notable social reunions of the time. But there is one of those Lyceum suppers a little more formal than the rest which I feel disposed to recall, because it gave evidence of quite an unsuspected power on the part of Henry Irving of suddenly replying as a speaker to an unexpected attack.

The occasion was the 100th performance of the *Merchant of Venice*, in 1879, and I think it was the first time that the stage of a great London theatre had been employed as the arena of a large and splendid entertainment. Since that time we have enjoyed such feasts under the hospitable auspices of Mr. Tree at His Majesty's—once, as I recall, on the occasion of the 100th night of *Julius Cæsar*, and again on a corresponding occasion to celebrate the successful run of *Ulysses*.

On the evening to which I now refer, the task of proposing Irving's health was entrusted to Lord Houghton, who, it was thought, would hardly choose that particular occasion to exhibit the cynical temper he was known to possess. But Lord Houghton, as I afterwards found reason to know, was not disposed to be governed by conventional restrictions, and he devoted nearly the whole of his speech to a considered depreciation of Irving's conception of Shylock, enlarging, in terms, that seemed to us who sat there, almost designedly bitter, upon what he considered the undeserved dignity that the actor had granted to the character.

It must have been that Irving was taken by surprise, and although his habit was always to speak from preparation, and often indeed to read what he had prepared, he proved himself, on this occasion, a master of good-humoured impromptu, twitting Lord Houghton, in a spirit of genial banter, with being a slave to the old-fashioned idea that Shylock was a comic villain, and promising on some future occasion to try and more amply satisfy his lordship's ideal by representing Shylock as a Houndsditch Jew with three hats upon his head and a bag of lemons in his hands. The actor's success, acknowledged by all who were present, was due, I think, mainly to the fact that, although taken off his guard by this unexpected provocation, there was not a trace of ill-humour in his reply.

There was one other occasion when Irving was the host at a small supper-party given at the Continental Hotel, when he showed an equal power of retaining his self-possession in circumstances the most trying and the most unexpected.

The honoured guest of the evening—entertained upon his return from a foreign campaign—was a brilliant and gifted journalist, now no more, and chief among those whom he had specially desired Irving to invite to meet him was a distinguished statesman still living, though by deliberate choice he no longer takes an active part in public affairs. The guest for whom the entertainment was given arrived late, and when he appeared it was evident to those of us who knew him that he had dined, not wisely, but too well. On a sudden, and in response to the most harmless raillery on the part of the statesman to

whom I have referred, he rose and retorted with the most bitter and, if I may say so, the most vulgar abuse; and while we all sat appalled by the outrage he was committing, he turned and appealed to Irving to justify his extraordinary outburst. It was then that Irving's tact showed itself. Quietly and slowly he replied, "All I have to say, my dear friend, is, that first upon the list of those whom you specially desired I should invite to meet you this evening, stood the name of Lord ——." And then, as though to prove to us that he too could exhibit an equal measure of self-possession, the man so wantonly attacked, without a word of resentment or rebuke, quietly filled his glass and invited us to drink just one toast to say how glad we were to see our old friend returned once more from his travels abroad.

CHAPTER XVIII

SOME FOREIGN ACTORS

As I have said in a previous chapter, H. J. Montague, at the time that I first became a theatre-goer, was the accepted *jeune premier* of the time. He certainly had no rival among his own countrymen as the exponent of lovers' parts in modern comedy.

But there was a foreigner who had preceded him, whose art had a wider compass, and whose powers as a creator of the heroes of romance knew no rivalry. In such achievements Charles Fechter had a conquering gift that laid all lady worshippers at his feet. It was only at a later time that I saw him in Shakespeare, and then only in *Hamlet*. He was aged and had grown stout, and it is perhaps scarcely fair to speak of his abilities as a Shakespearian actor upon the imperfect evidence that was offered to me; but I thought even then that he treated the tragedy too exclusively from the point of view of a love story, reducing its higher imaginative message by too great a regard for Hamlet's relations with Ophelia. But that very tendency which seemed to me a fault in his Hamlet was part of a gift that left him unapproachable in rôles that were purely romantic.

I saw him first in *The Duke's Motto* at the Lyceum, and then in *Bel Demonio*, and again in *Ruy Blas*; and in all those performances, as I recall them, his fascination seemed irresistible. I can almost hear now the tones of his voice, defiant and triumphant, with that rich rising cadence which betrayed his foreign origin, as he came down the steps with Kate Terry in his arms in the former most tawdry of romantic plays. The impersonation of Ruy Blas cut deeper, as the play itself was more finely conceived. But, indeed, the effect he produced was hardly dependent upon the play. It rested rather upon something innately heroic in himself, something that left the spectator with a feeling of security from the first note struck by the actor, that the issue, however grave, and however perilous its intermediate passages, must leave him undefeated at the last. The last time I saw him was in *Monte Christo*, a drama with some strong scenes, but, on the whole, poorly constructed and unduly prolonged; and I remember, as I sat in the pit, that when midnight came and the end seemed still afar off, a cheery voice from the gallery cried out, "Good-night, Mr. Fechter, I shall be here again on Monday."

The sort of play in which Fechter scored his greatest success has long fallen out of fashion, but I cannot help thinking that if the actor were here to-day who could boast gifts equal to his, a play fitted to form a vehicle for the exercise of his powers would be quickly forthcoming.

Fechter's name naturally recalls other foreign actors and actresses who have visited our shores

during the last thirty years. The greatest of them all, to my thinking, and I am not unmindful of the name, of Salvini, was Madame Ristori. She had not, perhaps, the sudden power born of sudden impulse which Madame Bernhardt could boast, a power in which, I suppose, Madame Rachel was far superior to both. Indeed, I remember having a talk with Sir Frederick Leighton, who in his student days in Paris had known Rachel's acting well, and he assured me that Rachel stood as far above Sarah Bernhardt as Sarah Bernhardt stood above all other actresses of her time.

But Ristori's art, though it may have missed the occasional lightning flashes, was sustained throughout at a commandingly high level, sustained by a sense of style that gave continuous dignity and grace to all she did. Her Lucrezia Borgia rests with me as one of the most beautiful and at the same time most agonising performances I have ever seen upon the stage; and scarcely less memorable was her Marie Stuart.

It was during one of her later engagements in London that she conceived the ambition of playing the sleep-walking scene from *Macbeth* in the English language, and she asked me, with one or two other critics, to come to her house in order that we might correct any errors of pronunciation which her performance might betray. It was in a little drawing-room somewhere down in South Belgravia that we sat and listened to her as, in her ordinary every-day garb, she acted the scene; and I do not think there was one of us who was not so entirely absorbed in the beauty and power of the impersonation as not com-

pletely to forget the special mission upon which we had been summoned. It was only afterwards—when, recalling us to our task, she sat in our midst and quietly read the words over again—that we discovered she blundered in one particular, and in one particular only. When she came to the line, "Not all the perfumes of Arabia," it seemed impossible for her tongue, "hung," as Sala used to say of his own, "in a southern belfry," not to give an absolutely equal emphasis to each separate syllable of the final word. There was no other fault to find, and when afterwards, encouraged by our praise, she gave the performance in the theatre, its effect was deeply impressive.

A little later, on my recommendation, she read, in English, Webster's tragedy of *The Duchess of Malfi*, and at the time she was so keenly impressed with the beauty of the character, as set in its lurid frame, that she entertained the project of having a version of the play made for her in Italian.

As I walked away from her house that day with John Oxenford, he was recalling to me some of his earlier experiences as dramatic critic of the *Times*. In those later days he had allowed himself to become little more than a good-natured chronicler of the narrative underlying each play as it was presented, and rarely elected to be critical or censorious, whether of the qualities of the dramatist and still less of the manner in which the actors acquitted themselves. In the discharge of this function, however, he had no equal. There was no one on the Press at that time who could, with such grace or in so narrow a compass, set forth the story of the plot of

the drama under consideration. But some of us, who brought to our work the greater keenness of youth, were disposed to reproach him with the unvarying good-nature which governed his appreciation of the art of the time.

Some such feeling I must have expressed to him as we sauntered along, for he told me, by way of rejoinder, that he had very early learnt his lesson not to endeavour to intrude his own opinions into the columns of the *Times*. Near the beginning of his career, he had indulged in some unfavourable comment upon the performance of the orchestra, which provoked an angry letter of remonstrance from the player of the trombone—a letter of remonstrance that in its turn called down a sharp rebuke upon the critic from the great editor, Mr. Delane.

"I wish it to be understood," he curtly intimated to Oxenford, "that the *Times* has no desire to be embroiled in controversy with trombone players."

And Oxenford assured me that he had since acted upon this clear note of warning, and had accordingly avoided as much as possible any kind of criticism that might invite a retort from the injured player, though he had on one occasion, as he confessed, indulged in an epigram that might, he feared, have injured his position. It was of some young actor, whose performance seemed to him more than usually incompetent, that he ventured the remark: "We are told that Mr. So-and-so is a promising performer. For our own part we can only say that we care not how often he promises so long as he never again performs."

But this was an isolated instance in the powers

of sarcasm which he undoubtedly possessed, and for the most part he continued to the end of his career in a spirit of unruffled urbanity.

The visit of the French players during the Franco-German War stirred London not a little, and undoubtedly exercised a considerable influence upon the younger representatives of dramatic art in England.

Delaunay and Got were in their separate ways perfect masters of that restrained and balanced art which is the outcome of the French system of training, exhibited in its perfect form in the French National Theatre. And the restraint and modesty of their methods strongly appealed to that younger school of actors in England who were already striving after a greater naturalness of interpretation. But their appeal was made for the most part in the region of comedy, and it was the advent of Salvini, with his larger and more passionate individuality, that gave a new impulse to the rendering of tragic character.

Salvini was beyond question a superb performer. His natural equipment for an actor, as exhibited in a voice of unexampled power and charm, was in itself more than sufficient to warrant the extraordinary outburst of enthusiasm which greeted his appearance in London. And yet, for all his undeniable power, his actual rendering of the character of Othello never seemed to me to be in perfect keeping with the spirit and intention of the author.

Overmastering in his strength and superb in his rendering of the more passionate passages of the play, he missed, as I felt at the time, and as I still

feel, the tragic sublimity that marks the closing scenes of the drama.

I shall not easily forget my first vision of Sarah Bernhardt in Dumas' play of *L'Étrangère*, in which she was associated with Coquelin, Monnet, Sully, and Croizette. She seemed, even beside such accomplished players as these, to be a creature of a separate race, endowed with a force and intensity of feeling that made those around her appear to be moving in a lower world.

It was, however, only when she came to London that I got to know her personally, and after I had produced my play of *King Arthur* at the Lyceum Theatre, she was so strongly attracted by the subject that she had a French version of the drama prepared, wherein she intended herself to impersonate the character of Lancelot. But, like so many other projects which Madame Bernhardt has from time to time entertained, the favourable opportunity for such a performance passed by, and the idea was replaced by other and more pressing demands upon her brilliant career.

When she was in London she was a constant guest at Irving's little suppers at the Lyceum, where she evinced the warmest admiration for the genius of Miss Ellen Terry. One evening, when Miss Terry was protesting that she was no longer young enough to undertake some rôle that Irving was pressing her to interpret, Sarah leant across the table and said, "My dearling, there are two peoples who shall never be old—you and me." And, indeed, it may be allowed that in both cases the boast has won some warrant from nature. The

youth of Miss Terry seems to be an indestructible gift. It is born again with each day of her existence, and as an essential quality of her nature has suffered no change and has known no deterioration from the early days when, after a brief period of absence, she returned to the stage as the heroine of Charles Reade's drama, *The Wandering Heir.*

I think Sarah Bernhardt was always at her best when Miss Terry was one of her audience, and I recollect one occasion in particular, when, in company with Miss Terry, I witnessed a performance of the *Dame aux Camelias* which in sincerity and power far surpassed any of the many representations of the character which I had seen Madame Bernhardt previously deliver.

It was a particularly interesting evening, for it happened that only a few nights before Miss Terry and I had also together seen Madame Duse play the same part in the same theatre. Here again, I think, the Italian actress was finely inspired by the presence of her comrade, for she too had on that evening surpassed herself.

The contrast between the two performers was striking and complete, and would go far to prove how inexhaustible are the resources of the actor's art, and how varied the influences of each separate personality, even when they are employed upon the same material.

CHAPTER XIX

THE WORK OF THE THEATRE

In 1887 my friend Mr. Beerbohm Tree, who had already won considerable distinction as an actor, decided to enter upon the management of a London theatre, and he asked me to associate myself with the enterprise.

The play chosen for his first venture was *The Red Lamp* by Outram Tristram, and it is an evidence of some element of strength and distinction in the work that it still survives, after a lapse of twenty-one years, as an integral part of Mr. Tree's repertoire. At the first it looked very much as though it had but little chance to survive at all. Coldly received by the Press, it failed during the first days of its run to attract the notice of the public; but little by little the audiences grew in numbers, and as the season advanced the house was crowded night after night by an eager and enthusiastic public.

With the close of the season Mr. Tree shifted his quarters to the Haymarket, and there it still served him as his opening production while more important work was in preparation. Those early days of managerial experiences have left many pleasant recollections. We were both of us new at

our task, and both unshaken in our faith in the readiness of the public to welcome every form of serious drama.

My alliance with Mr. Tree endured for some little time after his removal to the Haymarket, and it was not until two years later that, at the invitation of my friend Mr. Stuart Ogilvie, I undertook the independent direction of the Comedy Theatre.

Among the writers with whom I was brought into contact during my term of management was the late Robert Buchanan, a man who undoubtedly possessed a remarkable talent, but who very often, from a certain indolence of nature, did himself less than justice. I had met him first at the Haymarket, where he had prepared a version of Daudet's famous story of *Froment Jeune et Risler Aîné* for production on the stage, and I confess at that time I was not prepossessed in his favour. It was impossible at first to shake off the prejudice created by that unfortunate article wherein, under an assumed name, he had attacked his brother poets; nor indeed could that particular incident in his career ever be in any way excused.

But I found in my later knowledge of him that he could boast of other and better qualities than were exhibited here. A measure of poetic fancy he had always possessed, a fancy very happily illustrated in the little musical piece founded upon the story of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* produced under my management; but even there his better gifts suffered from a lack of persistence in working out the theme under his hand. And so it was with all that Buchanan accomplished. Sometimes a brilliantly

written scene would be followed and robbed of its effect by work that was only perfunctory.

He had a sense of the stage, but he had never been at the pains fully to master the conditions of the theatre, so that even in the best that he accomplished he could not make full use of its resources or duly observe its limitations.

It was during the period of my association with the Comedy Theatre that Irving invited me to write for him a play on the subject of King Arthur. He had already in his possession a drama by W. G. Wills upon the same theme, and at first the project took the form of an offer on his part that I should revise, and in part rewrite, Wills's somewhat slovenly essay. But when I tried to set myself to the task I found that, for me at least, it was impossible of achievement. I had long known and loved the Arthurian legends as they are enshrined in Sir Thomas Malory's exquisite romance, and it seemed to me that the tragedy that lay in the loves of Lancelot and Guinevere was susceptible of more dramatic treatment than Wills had accorded it. When I explained my difficulty to Irving he at once gave to his original proposal a new form, permitting me very willingly to abandon altogether Wills's experiment and to write for him a drama of my own.

When the time approached for its production he eagerly acquiesced, as I have already related, in my suggestion that Burne-Jones should be invited to design the scenery and costumes, and it was further agreed between us that the music, which was destined to form an important feature in the presentation of the piece, should be entrusted to Sir Arthur Sullivan.

Sullivan was already counted among my intimate friends. I had met him first many years before at Sir Coutts Lindsay's country-house in Scotland, and it was not long before the acquaintance ripened into a close and lasting friendship. To those who knew and loved Sullivan, and I think he was loved by all who knew him, the extraordinary charm of his personality will be unreservedly acknowledged.

There have been few men in our time in any walk of life who have possessed an equal measure of social fascination. His manner, always sympathetic and sincere, suffered no change in whatever company he found himself, and there was added to this finer quality of sympathy a quick and delicate sense of humour that made closer comradeship with him inspiring and delightful. And although he was well entitled to claim a separate consideration for the art to which his whole life was unsparingly devoted, it was wonderful to observe with what patience and tact he subordinated any distinctive claim which I have known other musicians, not so finely endowed, often to assert, and with how much skilful readiness he could adjust the competing requirements of music and the drama, when they had to be linked together, so as to produce a combined effect upon the audience.

The subject of King Arthur, while the production was in progress at the Lyceum, took a strong hold upon him, and it was only a very little while before his death that he made a proposition to me that I should so far rearrange the material I had treated as to provide a libretto for an opera he had in his mind to compose.

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SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN

From the painting by J. MILLAIS, Bart., P.R.A.
National Po

It was some little time after the Lyceum production that I became even more closely associated with him in the production of *The Beauty Stone*. The book was written by Mr. Pinero and myself, and Sir Arthur Sullivan was the composer. During a part of that time he occupied a charming little villa at Beaulieu on the Riviera, and there I stayed with him for six weeks while he was setting some of the more important of the lyrics in the opera.

The near neighbourhood of Monte Carlo presented an element of temptation to Sullivan, who was a born gambler. But he was at the time so hard set upon his work that he announced to me on my arrival his fixed resolve that our visits to the Casino should be strictly limited to two days in the week. Like all born gamblers Arthur had his peculiar superstitions. He could not endure to be watched while he was playing; and if he chanced to catch sight of me anywhere near the table at which he was seated, his resentment found eloquent expression. It was only when I contrived to keep entirely out of sight that I was able to observe him as he sat wholly absorbed in the play. The excitement to which he yielded on these occasions was extraordinary, and the rapidity with which he covered the series of chosen numbers very often outran his own remembrance of what he had done.

I have seen him, as he passed from one table to the other, followed by a friendly croupier carrying a handful of gold which he himself was ignorant he had won. And when the evening closed, and we found ourselves once more in the train that was to take us back to Beaulieu, he would

sometimes sink back entirely exhausted with the energy he had expended in his three hours' traffic in the rooms.

Our life at Beaulieu, wholly delightful as it was—for there never was a host to equal him in simple and graceful hospitality—had nevertheless its humorous aspects. We lived, indeed, a sort of Box and Cox existence. The brisk air and bright climate tempted me to rise early, and I was generally at work on the little terrace outside my room by nine o'clock in the morning. It was Sullivan's habit, on the other hand, to lie late, and our first meeting of the day occurred only at lunch-time. Sometimes, but not always, he would work a little during the afternoon, but it was only when dinner was over, and we had played a few games of bezique, that he set himself seriously to his task. We parted generally at about eleven, and then Arthur's musical day began. Withdrawing himself into a little glass conservatory that overlooked the Mediterranean, he would often remain at his desk, scoring and composing, till four or even five o'clock in the morning, and it was only rarely during the labour of composition that he had any need to have recourse to the piano to try over a few notes of the melody he had under treatment.

His actual pen-work when he was engaged in scoring his composition for the orchestra was of surprising neatness and delicacy, and I think it was this part of his task he enjoyed the most. He used to say to me that the invention of melody rarely presented to him any grave difficulty. It flowed naturally, almost spontaneously, when he had once

fixed the musical rhythm which he felt the meaning of the words and the chosen metre of the verse rightly demanded. Here he took extraordinary pains to satisfy himself, and it was, I think, this spirit of exacting loyalty to the special quality of each separate lyric that gave to his work its special value in relation to the theatre.

Sullivan was always anxious to gather any hint or suggestion from the writer with whom he was associated. I told him one day that in composing verse that was to be set to music I always had some dumb tune echoing in my brain, and I can recall now his futile endeavours to extract from me even the vaguest idea of what this "unheard melody" might be. Sometimes in a spirit of pure mischief he would see how far he could impose upon my confessed ignorance of the musician's art. He invited me one day to his rooms in Victoria Street to listen to the musical form he proposed to adopt in setting the final choruses of *King Arthur*, and when, after playing over what he would himself have described as a "tinpot melody," he inquired if the result came up to my expectation, the imperturbable gravity of his face entirely deceived me.

"Well, my dear Arthur," I replied, "if that is what you propose, I can only assume that one of us two is a vulgar fellow, and I suppose I am the culprit."

And then, with a twinkle in his eye, he said, "Well, perhaps you prefer this," and proceeded to play the melody he had really composed for the purpose.

Unhappily, during the time that *The Beauty*

Stone was being composed, poor Sullivan was often suffering great physical pain, which sometimes rendered his task difficult and onerous. And yet even then the natural brightness of his disposition constantly asserted itself, and he rarely allowed others to be conscious of what he himself endured. How great was the strain illness cast upon him became painfully apparent during the period of our rehearsals; for, although he never spared himself, it was clear to those who were near him that the cost to himself in nervous exhaustion was often almost more than he could bear.

Those who followed his body to St. Paul's will not easily forget the touching solemnity of the occasion. His own Chorus from the Savoy was permitted to sing one of his own beautiful compositions as the coffin was slowly lowered into the vault. That so beautiful and sunny a nature, rich in all the qualities that make for sweet friendship, and so nobly endowed with gifts that leave his place as a musician lasting and secure, should have been consigned to such martyrdom of physical suffering ranks among those decrees of fate that it is vain to question and idle to seek to evade. Few men could boast of having conferred upon their generation such fresh and lasting enjoyment; for it may be confidently said that, in that long series of works in which his name will ever be associated with that of Sir William Gilbert, there was added to the garnered store of the world's pure pleasure a new harvest of delight reaped from a field that none had tilled before.

To those who love the theatre the labours of rehearsal, though they are exacting and some-

times exhausting, yield many delightful experiences. There comes a moment even in the writing of a play when the puppets of the author's invention seem suddenly to take a detached existence and to follow a law of development that is only half-consciously dictated by their creator. This impression, which I suppose nearly all writers in the region of fiction must have felt, is renewed and intensified as a play takes shape upon the stage. The intrusion of the actor's personality, sometimes enhancing the original conception, and always in some degree modifying the intended balance of the design, adds a new colour to the written page. And then, as day by day the scattered fragments are gradually united and the interpretation grows in emotional strength, there come moments of keen enjoyment of the actor's art that equal, if they do not surpass, any later impression that may be yielded when the performance is finally presented with the added effects of costume and scenery.

The bare, empty stage, with the players in their ordinary working-day dress, presents but a mournful appearance to a chance visitor who is a stranger to the scene. But those who work day by day in the theatre sometimes find, as the rehearsals advance, that this ill-lit, unfurnished void can on a sudden be transformed into a world of enchantment. The actor and the author together are as yet undisturbed in their task, and what is still to come in the way of added illusion their imagination can readily supply.

And yet the bringing together of all the contributory arts that are combined in the service of an important production has an interest of its own.

From the initial step, when the little toy models of the scenic artist are passed and approved, to the final moment of the dress rehearsal, there is a vast amount of work to be done in every department, and during the progress of that work the theatre becomes a truly democratic institution. Author and composer, the master carpenter, the property master, and the electrician are linked together in a spirit of equal comradeship, and there is not one of them all who has it not in his power to make or mar the work of his fellows.

It is one of the inscrutable laws of the theatre that nothing is ever quite ready until the last moment. Costumes are delayed, properties are incomplete, or it may be some scene that did not quite fit its purpose is undergoing structural amendment, and has yet to receive the final touches at the hands of the scene-painter. All these circumstances, perhaps inevitable in view of the countless details that have to be fitted together in order to perfect the complex puzzles of a production, are apt to give to the final rehearsals an impression of chaos and confusion. It is not an uncommon remark made by those who are admitted to such rehearsals, "But you surely do not intend to produce this play in two days' time?" And, except to the expert who knows that what is lacking is already in an advanced stage of preparation, the doubt implied in the question is natural enough.

But even with all the experience of the expert there are occasions when these inevitable delays approach very nearly to disaster. I remember that the dress rehearsal of *Called Back*, when I had

not yet gained a full mastery over the mechanical resources of the theatre, lasted till six o'clock in the morning, and during the small hours one after another of the members of the company came to me and implored that the production might be postponed. But with an audacity that was born of inexperience I persisted that all would be ready in time. We left the theatre at half-past six, and were back again at ten o'clock to renew the rehearsal; and to the astonishment of all,—an astonishment in which I confess I shared,—when the evening came, the play went without mishap to a successful close. But these long rehearsals often result in trials of temper as well as of strength, and now and again it happens that the wearied stage-hands are not wholly equal to their work.

King Arthur was produced under conditions that were exceptionally trying, for, at the time that the heavy scenic material had to be arranged upon the stage, a pantomime was running at the theatre during the afternoons. Much that was employed in the pantomime had to be daily removed to make room for our own scenery, and replaced again for the performance of the next afternoon. At one of the rehearsals, as Arthur Sullivan and I stood upon the stage listening to his setting of the "May Song," the high platform upon which Queen Guinevere and her maids were standing suddenly gave way, and to our horror fell with a crash to the stage. For the moment we thought that some grave disaster must have occurred, but with sudden instinct Miss Terry had flung herself prone upon the pedestal where she had been standing,

and escaped with nothing more serious than a few bruises.

The protest against scenic display in the theatre is constantly renewed, but is not always very intelligently directed. That scenery can be inappropriate in its magnificence is true enough, but it is not less true that it can be equally inappropriate in its inefficiency. The question, when all is said, is one of taste and fitness, and involves no irrefutable principle.

To ignore the enlarged resources of the modern scene-painter's art would, I think, be foolish, even if it were possible. The problem before the theatre now is to control these resources, and to reconsider and to reforge the means which shall set them again in clear subjugation to the essential claims of the drama. It may be conceded that during the last thirty years the need of this subjugation has not always been sufficiently borne in mind, and there have been instances not a few where the eye has been fed at the expense of the ear. But this scenic art is a thing so beautiful in itself that it would be hard indeed if any mere pedantry of taste should force its exclusion from the theatre.

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